

VARAZDIN
LEPOGLAVA
LOBOR
G. RIJEKA
LJUBLJANA
SLOVENIA
SAVA RIV.
ZAGREB
(HRVATSKA)
BJELOVAR
JASKA
KUPA RIV
SISAK
ITALY
BEFORE 1945
FIUME-
YUGOSLAVIAN
SINCE 1945
RIJEKA
SUŠAK
KARLOVAC
PETRINJA
OGULIN
CROATIA
KORANA
GLINA
KORDUN
DVOR
KOSTAJNICA
KRK
SLUNJ
UNA RIV.
NOVI
POLA
CRES
SENJ
LIKA
BOSANSKA KRAYINA
PRIJEDOR
RAB
OTOČAC
BIHAĆ
JADOVNO
SANA R.
LOŠINJ
GOSPIĆ
PAG
B
GRAČAC
DRVAR
ADRIATIC SEA
DALMATIA
BY ITALY
BOS
ZADAR
(ZARA)
DUGI OTOK
KNIN
CETINA R.
ŠIBENIK
SINJ
SPLIT
BRAČ
HVAR
VIS
KORČULA
LASTOVO
LEGEND:
CROATIAN PUPPET STATE
STATE BOUNDARY
PROVINCIAL
USTASHI SO CALLED SUMMARY COURTS
USTASHI CAMPS
TERRITORY OCCUPIED BY ITALY
TERRITORY OCCUPIED BY HUNGARY


HUNGARY
DANUBE
OCCUPIED BY HUNGARY
SUBOTICA
ROMANIA
SENTA
KIKINDA
DRAVA RIV
VIROVITICA
SOMBOR
BARANJA
D. MIHOLJAC
KULA
BEČEJ
DARUVAR
OSIJEK
BACHKA
(BAČKA)
BANAT
TISSA
SLAVONIA
PETROVGRAD
(BEČKEREK)
VUKOVAR
NOVI SAD
DJAKOVO
DANUBE RIV
VINKOVCI
(DUNAV)
GRADIŠKA
SLAVONSKI BROD
SREM (SIRMIA)
BOSANSKI
SAVA RIV.
MITROVICA
RUMA
DERVENTA
BOSNA R.
ŠAMAC
PANČEVO
ZEMUN
BRČKO
ŠABAC
DOBOJ
BJELJINA
BEOGRAD
(BELGRADE)
TUZLA
LOZNICA
KRUSCICA
SERBIA
JAJCE
ZVORNIK
KOLUBARA
VALJEVO
ZENICA
TRAVNIK
KAKANJ
SARAJEVO
UŽICE
W. MORAVA R.
ČAČAK
VIŠEGRAD
JABLANICA
KONJIC
DRINA R
LIM R.
FOČA
PLEVLJA
MOSTAR
SJENICA
HERCEGOVINA
NEVESINJE
TARA R.
NOVI PAZAR
NERETVA
PIVA R.
GACKO
BJELO POLJE
MONTENEGRO
ŠAVNIK
BERANE
KOLAŠIN
MLJET
TREBINJE
ZETA
PEĆ
NIKŠIĆ
MORACHA
DUBROVNIK
(RAGUSA)
DEČANI
CETINJE
PODGORICA
KOTOR
ALBANIA

GENOCIDE IN SATELLITE CROATIA
1941-1945

Genocide
in
Satellite Croatia, 1941-1945

A Record of Racial and Religious Persecutions and Massacres

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FOREWORD

One of the most disastrous results of the First World War was the disintegration of that liberal and tolerant spirit which civilized nations of the twentieth century were supposed to have acquired. The great conflict completely destroyed, along with other catastrophic consequences, any such hope. Exaggerated nationalism, fascism and communism, as well as political and religious fanaticism, paved the way for the Second World War, thus bringing society down to a lower level of moral civilization, characterized by an incredible intolerance which was thought to have vanished with the Middle Ages.

In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler stressed his favorite theme of pan-Germanism, and succeeded in swaying public opinion by blinding it with his pseudo-scientific arguments, based on delirious ethnology of the pretended superiority of the German race. Presumably this gave them a natural right to rule over Europe, if not over the entire world, while other nations, above all the Slavs, must work for their overlords just as the slaves had done in times gone by. As for the Jews, they could never be assimilated and were therefore doomed to death.

The great powers were incredibly deaf to these insane ideas. As they grew, they developed their denouement until they eventually took seed in foreign countries, notably in Croatia, where a similar doctrine, though on a smaller scale, had flourished eighty years earlier under Ante Starcevic, a Croatian politician who might be considered the father of racism.

This book was written in order to record the time and place of the frightful ravages caused by such an extreme ideology, during the years 1941-1945, in the satellite state of Croatia under the government of Croatian fascists, known as the *Ustashi,* supported by the Axis powers, as well as by the Croatian Catholic hierarchy, with the knowledge of the Vatican.

In order to justify his policy of extermination, the Sultan, Abdual Hamid, was known to say: "The way to get rid of the Armenian question is to get rid of the Armenians."

This same maxim was adopted by the Croatian nationalists and clericals concerning the Serbian question in Croatia. According

to the statutes of the Ustashi organization, "the name Ustashi was to be given to those who, in pre-war Yugoslavia, swore that by the destruction of the *Yugoslav State he* [*they*] *helped in the extermination of Serbianism and the Orthodox Church.*" (*Nova Hrvatska,* May 4, 1941.)

The collusion of the Croatian fascist government (or the Ustashi), and the Croatian Catholic hierarchy seems to have been inspired, under these tragic circumstances, by an anachronistic fanaticism.

It was with reason that the Serbian Orthodox Bishop, Dr. Nikolaj Velimirovic, so well known to the Anglo-Saxon world, compared what happened in Croatia, on such a large scale, with the darkest days of the Middle Ages. In an article published in 1954 by the ecclesiastical review *Svecanik,* the Bishop wrote:

"The Spanish Inquisition is noted for its atrocities. The head inquisitor, named by the Pope, was the Dominican Monk Thomas de Torquemada, who is remembered with such sinister bitterness. During the eighteen year period of his mandate, 10,220 persons were burned at the stake while 114,401 (according to the historian Motley) perished from hunger and torture in their prisons, which meant 125,000 people within a period of eighteen years.

"This record is frightful enough, but the inquisition of the Serbian Orthodox was much more terrible, for 750,000 Serbs were killed in just four years."

It would be difficult to find a parallel of such ferocious persecution in all history. Even the Duke of Albe, that sinister representative of the Spanish King (Philippe II), to the Low Countries, seemed quite moderate in comparison, having tortured and killed some 18,000 Protestants within six years.

In France, the massacre of St. Bartholomew on August 24, 1572, so justifiably stigmatized by the historians, resulted in only 100,000 victims.

The twentieth century, however, was doomed to witness in Europe, in the name of racial purity and religion such a genocide[1] as the past has *never known,* in which the Orthodox

[1] . . . any acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such . . . a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world.

Serbs in Croatia barely escaped complete extermination. Yet this gigantic holocaust, which took place only a few years ago and which was witnessed by the present generation, has given rise to the most fantastic stories, accompanied by an intense propaganada that still continues a tireless effort to "cleanse" the guilty of any sense of responsibility. All kinds of printed matter, written under the guise of the "greatest objectivity," and published largely by the Croatian and Vatican printing presses, is being circulated throughout the world.

In order to re-establish a truthful record concerning this tragedy, with its causes and the roles played by those who never hesitated profiting by this expansion of religious and national imperialism, while defying all humanity, I have undertaken the gathering of numerous testimonies printed by the Croatian and Catholic press during those tragic times. Here also are records of Yugoslav and foreign documents which appeared after the war, and testimonies, published in authentic sources, from some of the persecuted who escaped the inferno.

Unfortunately, I have been obliged to choose only a limited number of these significant texts which are numerous enough to fill an entire library.

But these selected testimonies will amply suffice as a record of actual events, and thus serve in throwing light upon those responsible for this drama.

It is difficult for the world to believe that a whole people could be doomed to extermination by a government and a religious hierarchy of the twentieth century, just because it happened to belong to another ethnical and racial group and which had inherited the Christianity of Byzantium rather than that of Rome.

May I add that far from desiring to stir up hard feelings, I have been motivated by the desire to divulge the truth concerning the frightful tragedy that took place, and to show what a shameful racial and religious recession has resulted from such fanaticism. May the disaster of the recent past serve as a lesson for future generations!

EDMOND PARIS

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest genocide during World War II, in proportion to a nation's population, took place, not in Nazi Germany but in the Nazi-created puppet state of Croatia. There, in the years 1941-1945, some 750,000 Serbs, 60,000 Jews and 26,000 Gypsies—men, women and children—perished in a gigantic holocaust. These are the figures used by most foreign authors, especially the Germans, who were in the best position to know. Hermann Neubacher, perhaps the most important of Hitler's trouble-shooters in the Balkans, reports that although some of the perpetrators of the crime estimated the number of Serbs killed at one million, the more accurate figure is 750,000.[1] One of Hitler's generals, Lothar Rendulic, who was in the area where the crimes were committed, estimates that in the first year of the existence of the puppet state of Croatia at least a half million Orthodox Serbs were massacred, and that many others were killed in subsequent years.[2] French writers most often use the half-million figure while British sources usually cite 700,000 Serbs killed.

The magnitude and the bestial nature of these atrocities makes it difficult to believe that such a thing could have happened in an allegedly civilized part of the world. Yet even a book such as this can attempt to tell only a part of the story.

The reader will no doubt ask: Why did it happen? The author believes that the reader himself must answer that question. But a brief account of the past may be of assistance. Because the victims were for the most part Serbs who belonged to the Serbian Orthodox Church, it seems desirable to indicate who the Serbs were, how they happened to live in these areas and what had been their relations with the other people in the same geographic region.

In the middle ages the Serbs had their own independent nation, occupying the area of what is now the southern part of Yugoslavia. After their defeat by the Turks at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, they began moving northward, entering regions then under the nominal rule of Hungary, hoping to live to fight another day on behalf of Christianity and freedom. This

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[1] *Sonder-Auftrag Suedost 1940-1945: Bericht eines fliegenden Diplomaten* (Goettingen—Berlin—Frankfurt, 1956), pp. 31-32. See note on page 15.

[2] *Gekaempft Gesiegt Geschlagen* (Heidelberg, 1952), pp. 161-62.

Serbian emigration reached considerable proportions after the fall of the Serbian ruler, Djurdja Brankovic (1459) and after the fall of Bosnia (1463) to the Turks.

The Hungarian kings used the emigrant Serbs in the struggles to defend their borders from the Turks, because the Serbs, already at that time, were known as able and competent soldiers. After Hungary united with Austria (1526), the Austrian rulers created a military belt stretching from the Adriatic Sea in the West to the Carpathian Mountains in the East, known as *Vojna Krajina* (literally military zone or region).

This region was populated chiefly by Serbs. Most of the Croatians, who were tenants of landed estates in this area, fled to Hungary, Austria, Italy, Bavaria or Croatia proper (Croatia had been absorbed in the twelfth century by Austria and Hungary). The Austrian rulers settled the depopulated areas with Serbs, who had come, not as refugees, but as warriors. They were given land (they became free peasant owners), but they had to promise that a certain number of men had to be under arms constantly. All men between 18 and 60 had to do military service whenever they were called.

Thus, the Serbs came to empty, deserted property. And the Austrian authorities were glad to have them, because they did not come as ordinary refugees, seeking merely to save their necks, but as warriors willing to continue the fight against the infidel Turk, in the eternal hope that one day Turkey would be defeated and they could return to their own lands. But the Turkish occupation was to last some five hundred years. In the meantime, the Serbs became valuable and respected citizens, settled in their new home, although they often had to pay a dear price for living on the frontier, exposed to periodic Turkish military onslaughts.

But the Serbs were also to face difficulties inside the Austrian and Hungarian kingdoms. To the north of them was Croatia proper, a strongly clerical land. Life was difficult there for anyone who was not a Roman Catholic. The Catholic bishops (from Zagreb and from Senj), with the help of Viennese Jesuits, sought constantly to convert the newly-arrived Serbs to Catholicism in the regions bordering on Croatia, or at least to get them to accept the Uniate rite. Many times those attempts were aided by military authorities using brute force, although the Austrian kings were officially and formally on the side of the Serbs.

In short, the Serbs in these regions were to be on the defensive

for 350 years, trying to preserve their religion (Serbian Orthodox) and their national identity. Their right to own land and their right to work for the state were limited because they were not Catholics. Serbian priests were tortured and imprisoned because they refused to join the Uniates. These restrictions and persecutions have been described by Croatian and German (Austrian) historians. And they were admitted by the various official promises of rectification.

There was a considerable discrepancy between theory and practice. From time to time, the authorities promised autonomy and independence for the Orthodox Church. They even promised autonomy for Serbian civil authorities (e.g. Emperor Joseph of Hungary in 1706). And yet the military chaplain of Lika (Marko Mesic) could proclaim: "Be converted to Catholicism or get out!" Vienna could say one thing (how sincerely?), while local authorities could do another.

The Croatians feared the progress that the Serbs were making in all fields: religion, economics, education and culture. They were determined to do something about it. In the eighteenth century, for example, they instructed the Croatian representatives in the Hungarian parliament to seek the enactment of laws and regulations which would make life impossible for the Serbian people and for the Orthodox Church. Among the measures proposed were the following: to prevent the organization of Serbian high schools (the Croats did not yet have elementary schools in Croatian), to prevent the building of Orthodox Churches, to take away all property of Serbian monasteries, to prevent the collection of contributions for monasteries, to turn the Orthodox clergy over to the courts as ordinary trash, and to do away with the schism.

Maria Theresa, however, rejected these demands because Serbian military power was needed in the struggle against the Turks.

In the nineteenth century, this hatred for the Serbs, heretofore largely confined to the Catholic priesthood, was transferred to the Croatian people. To this end, Ante Starcevic, whom the Croatians called the father of his country, contributed the most. He is the first Croatian racist, putting forth the slogan: "The Serbs are a breed fit only for the slaughter house." Subsequently, he put forth the saying: "Serbs to the willows," meaning that the Serbs should be hung on willow trees.

Although there was a split among Starcevic's followers, he

succeeded in forming a political movement whose chief reason for existence was hatred of the Serbs. After his death, Starcevic was succeeded by Josef Frank, who entered into close collaboration with the Croatian clericals to form a Frankist party, which was under the direct influence of Vienna. To this extremist group belonged Ante Pavelic, who in 1941 was to arrive from Italy and with the aid of Fascist and Nazi power to become head of the Axis puppet state of Croatia, and soon thereafter the principal butcher of the Serbs. But this is getting ahead of the story.

In 1918, the Frankist party, which had in the past relied on Vienna for support, went out of existence. With the defeat of Austro-Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro joined with Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and other regions formerly under Austro-Hungarian rule to form a common state—Yugoslavia. In such circumstances there was no place for a Frankist party.

While the experience of a common nationhood for the Serbs and the Croats was in many ways a stormy one, and certainly beyond the possibility of adequate description here, two elemental points need to be made. First of all, in the political sphere, considerable progress was made in Serb-Croat relations prior to 1941. Secondly, in the religious sphere, the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed full freedom to pursue its activities and to prosper. These two points need further brief elaboration.

Yugoslavia became a political democracy. But Serbia, because of her previous existence as a nation (and consequently her greater political experience) and because the Serbs were more numerous than all of the other groups combined, had a dominant voice in the new nation's political affairs. This led to some dissatisfaction, and subsequently to more extreme difficulties, resulting in the establishment of a dictatorship in 1929. In 1931, the dictatorship was modified to a degree, with minor modifications in the late thirties. In 1939, an agreement (*Sporazum*) was concluded between the government in Belgrade and the representatives of the Croatian Peasant party, abandoning the principle of a centralist state.

Under the *Sporazum* Croatia was granted extensive political and economic autonomy, with her own government and her own assembly. The central government still controlled foreign affairs and defense. Croatia was to have autonomy in internal administration, justice, public education, agriculture, forestry, mining, construction, finance, health and social policy. Her territory

was enlarged, taking in over a million Serbs (under the Nazis it was to be enlarged still further). The head of the principal political party in Croatia (Croatian Peasant Party), Dr. Vlatko Macek, became vice-president of the central government. But the fanatics in Croatia could be satisfied with nothing short of the destruction of the Yugoslav state.

Parenthetically, it should be added that the *Sporazum* was received with dissatisfaction in Serbia. Serbs for the most part felt that the Croatians, a minority group, had been given rights which even the Serbs did not enjoy. The government was aware of this hostility and hence never submitted the *Sporazum* to the parliament for ratification.

On the religious front, the Roman Catholic Church had full freedom and equality from the beginning. Countless witnesses can testify to this fact, but it might be interesting to refer to one or two Catholic sources. A Croatian Catholic priest, Vjekoslav Wagner, spoke of the expansion of Catholicism in Serbia, adding that "such progress could be attained only in a country where religious tolerance and equality were living facts." [3] More recently, Belgian Catholics have reported how before the Second World War, the Catholic press (dailies, weeklies and monthlies) flourished in Yugoslavia, how Catholic schools, colleges and other religious centers functioned, how Catholic hospitals were built and Catholic organizations multiplied.[4] Dr. Anton Korosec, cleric and Slovene Catholic leader, has admitted that "even without the Concordat the Catholic Church enjoyed full freedom of action." [5]

There are ample statistics on the progress of the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia between the two world wars, and any one really interested in checking them can easily do so.

Nevertheless, extremist clerical elements in Croatia were dissatisfied living in a country where the Catholics were in a minority. Perhaps they feared the future. To allay these fears, Belgrade governments were willing to expose themselves to hostility in Serbia and in other Serbian Orthodox regions by entering into a Concordat with the Vatican, which would formalize relations between the Church and the state. Belgrade hoped

[3] "Katolicizam u Srbiji" (Catholicism in Serbia), *Almanah Jugoslovenske Katolicke akademije* (1929), p. 3.

[4] *Une Eglise du silence—Catholiques en Yougoslavie* (Brussels, 1954), pp. 144, 149.

[5] *Hrvatska Zora* (Munich), September 1, 1954.

that this would placate Croatian Catholic hostility toward the state and the government.

The Concordat was opposed in Serbia because it granted privileges and guarantees to the Catholic Church which the Orthodox themselves did not enjoy. For example, the state was obligated to pay the Catholic Church for properties confiscated by the Austrian state (1780-1790), something that even Catholic Austria had refused to do. Moreover, the state was to pay for land taken by agrarian reform measures, but only to the Catholic Church and not the others.

That the disputed Concordat gave the Catholic Church a privileged position was recognized by Archbishop Bauer of Zagreb and his vicar, Stepinac, in a declaration on March 31, 1936: "The Catholic Church is not at all opposed to the Serbian Orthodox Church also receiving all that it perhaps does not now have and which is guaranteed to the Catholic Church by the Concordat." [6]

Parenthetically, it might be added that many Croatian leaders, including the head of the Croatian Peasant party, Stjepan Radic, were not in favor of the Concordat. They feared the entrenchment of clericalism in Croatia, and believed that the Concordat would facilitate it.

But the Croatian extremists were interested only in separatism; they did not want a common state. In 1929, Ante Pavelic fled to Italy and there resurrected the Frankist party in the form of a terrorist organization, called the Ustashi. He became the leader of the Croatian extremist separatist movement. He received considerable help from Mussolini (25 million liras and a promise of liberal sums to come).[7] He also received assistance from the Horthy regime in Hungary.

The members of Pavelic's organization were recruited from the most viciously anti-Serb and the most depraved and sadistic elements in Croatia. They trained for and engaged in terrorist activities. The Ustashi sent assassins and terrorists into Yugoslavia, who blew up bridges, placed bombs in public places, and contributed to the death and injury of many innocent victims. The Ustashi also killed King Alexander of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister, Louis Barthou, on October 9, 1934 in Marseilles.

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[6] Sima Simic, *Vatikan protiv Jugoslavije* (The Vatican Against Yugoslavia), (Titograd, 1958), pp. 16-17, and Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen* (Zagreb, 1948), p. 440.

[7] Hevre Lauriere, *Assassins au Nom de Dieu* (Paris, 1959), p. 17.

When Hitler and Mussolini destroyed Yugoslavia in 1941, Pavelic and his Ustashi were brought in to rule an enlarged puppet state of Croatia. To tell what they did to the Serbian population under their jurisdiction is the task of this book. It is the author's hope that these few pages will enable the reader to view the genocide in Croatia in some historical perspective. To see that it was not the result of a momentary disagreement with the Serbs or the result of a revolution. Rather it came as the consequence of a carefully prepared ideology which began in the second half of the nineteenth century and culminated in Pavelic's Ustashi.

See footnote 1, p. 9.

Statement of Hermann Neubacher reads as follows:

The recipe for the Orthodox solution of the Ustashi-fuehrer and the Poglavnik (head of State) of Croatia, Ante Pavelic, reminds one of the bloodiest memories connected with Religious Wars: "One third must be converted to Catholicism, one third must leave the country, and one third must die!" The last point of this programme was carried out. When leading Ustashi state that one million of Orthodox Serbs (including babies, children, women and old men) were slaughtered, this, in my opinion, is a boasting exaggeration. On the basis of reports I received, I estimated that three quarters of a million defenseless people were slaughtered.

As I repeated once again at the Headquarters the reality of the horrible events which were taking place in my Croatian neighborhood, Adolf Hitler replied:

"I also told the Poglavnik that it is not so simple to annihilate such a minority, it is too large."

CHAPTER I

The International Conspiracy Against Yugoslavia

THE founding of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 aroused considerable jealousy among some of the neighboring countries. All the old motives for envy were sharpened as the government faced the difficulties of internal policy in the founding of a really national state. Hungary, thenceforward separated from Austria, coveted the fertile land of the Vojvodina to the North of Belgrade; Bulgaria continued to revindicate Macedonia in Southern Serbia; while Fascist Italy dreamed of increasing her "vital living space" by annexing Dalmatia, once ruled over by Venice.

Rome was the center where all these ambitious aims converged. It was there that all the maneuvers for breaking up the Little Entente and preparing the encirclement of Yugoslavia were undertaken. Needless to say all these projects won the favor of Germany, just beginning to stir from the torpor of her defeat and echoed in the rantings of Adolph Hitler. With the rebirth of Pan-Germanism she began once again to look toward the East and counted on profiting from the insatiable appetites of her neighbors to assure her own expansion onto Slavic territory.

In the meanwhile, the Vatican placed all its hope on the Croatian nationalist movement which had taken up the fight against Yugoslavia. In April 1919, Cardinal Gasparri, Vatican Secretary of State, made a statement to the correspondent of the newspaper, *Petit Parisien*, in favor of Slovene and Croatian independence with republican governments.[1] According to the French journalist, Maurice Prax, Cardinal Gasparri on this occasion expressed his regret that Austria-Hungary had been destroyed, because it had formed a barrier against the Orient.

In 1932, a well-known English journalist, Wickham Steed, disclosed the Italo-Germanic and Hungarian plan which aimed to dismember Yugoslavia and to create a Balkan federation under Italian control:

[1] This declaration was reprinted by the Italian historian, Luigi Salvatorelli in his book, *La Politica della Santa Sede* (Milan, 1937), p. 77.

Meanwhile, there is much talk in various European capitals of the "Europe Congress" which has been meeting in Rome during the past week under the auspices of the Italian Royal Academy.

The recent visit of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Mr. Gömbos, to Signor Mussolini, is understood to have been connected with the real, though not perhaps the ostensible purpose of this Congress. The presence in Rome of German representatives like Dr. Schacht, the former Governor of the Reichbank, and, for a time, of prominent Hitlerites like Herren Rosenberg and Goering, is thought to be significant.

Features of the programs of this "Europe Congress" are:

Eventual curtailment of Roumanian Unity, taking account of Russian aims for the recovery of Bessarabia.

The inclusion of Transylvania, with the Bukovina and parts of Yugoslavia, in a Danubian confederation under German and Hungarian leadership.

Into this confederation Hungary, with somewhat increased territory, would enter, together with Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and part of Slovenia, after Yugoslavia should have been broken up.

A Customs Union, or preferential tariff arrangement would be established between this new Danubian confederation, Germany, Austria and Italy. Sooner or later Czechoslovakia would find herself compelled to join it.

Trieste and Fiume would remain under Italian rule, though Germany and Austria would enjoy special privileges in the Port of Trieste, and in the new Danubian confederation similar privileges in the Port of Fiume.

The old Kingdom of Rumania, with Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece, would be formed, under Italian influence, into a Balkan federation.

These, according to my information, are the main lines of the conception that has been secretly discussed at Rome. How far agreement has been reached upon any or all of them is uncertain, for they appear in German eyes, to be less favorable to German than to Italian aspirations.[2]

Albert Mousset also concluded that at this time Yugoslavia became the victim of a vast conspiracy and a disgraceful connivance instigated by her neighbors.[3]

After the breaking up of Austria-Hungary, Italy tried to become the protectress of Catholicism in central Europe and the Balkans, where she tried to impose her sovereignty.

Count Bethlen, a Hungarian, has clearly analyzed the motives of this imperialism:

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[2] *Sunday Times* (London), November 20, 1932.
[3] See *Europe Nouvelle*, October 22, 1932.

> Italy's greatest objective, as well as her historical law is to prevent the union of the Northern Slavs with the Southern Slavs. If she fails, a Slav supremacy will automatically take place in the Balkans. In this case Italy's ideal location on the Adriatic Sea and on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean will be compromised.
>
> This is a question of creating a counterbalance to the hegemony that France is exerting in the basin of the Danube with the help of the Little Entente, for if, in one way, this hegemony is not counterbalanced France will have a free reign in many other localities, and in another way, French policy in the Orient will have a pro-Slav tendency, dating from the time of the Franco-Russian alliance.
>
> Italy's interest coincides with that of Germany.[4]

When this revisionist movement began, its allies in Yugoslavia were in certain discontented groups that included former functionaries who had been in the service of Austria-Hungary and whose careers had been broken. Above all, there were officers who had been obliged to retire, for instance, General Sarkotic and Colonels Percevic and Dujic, all of Croatian origin. The Croat super-nationalists were soon to join this group, with Ante Pavelic, a former lawyer from Zagreb, as their leader. He envisioned a "pure and Catholic Croatia which should never, in any way, become a part of the Yugoslav federation," and he repudiated any association with the Slovenes, with those "dirty dogs" the Serbs, and above all he would not tolerate the "dirty" Jews. "This idea was not new. . . . It was the fruit of the cogitations of an agitator named Ante Starcevic, who was the ideological father of the terrorist sect known as the Ustashi." [5] Under Pavelic, the Ustashi became the Croat equivalent of the Nazi Storm Troopers. Originally, they were organized abroad with the help of Italy and Hungary. "Its personnel was recruited from the most viciously anti-Serb and most depraved and sadistic elements in Croatia. Imbued with the Nazi concept of 'racial' superiority, and with the Nazi approach to the problem of ethnic minorities, they coldbloodedly adopted a program calling for the liquidation of the Serb community in Pavelic's Croatia." [6]

The intellectual youth of Croatia, for whom there were insufficient positions, and who held the government responsible for this situation, also added its contingent of adepts to the movement.

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[4] Lecture at the Association for German Cultural Propaganda, Berlin, March 9, 1933.

[5] Jean-Marc Sabathier in the Magazine *PARIS-MATCH,* May 25, 1957, p. 21.

[6] David Martin, *Ally Betrayed* (New York, 1946), p. 48.

It is difficult to understand why all these chauvinistic patriots adhered enthusiastically to projects of upheaval in the Balkans which were bound to be at the expense of the Croats themselves. Doubtless it was a case of blind passion with some of them, but this excuse is not valid for those who, like Pavelic and his acolytes, were quite aware of the Italo-Germanic plan, yet ready to sell themselves, body and soul, to those who were seeking the dismemberment of their country of Croatia.

In 1929, when King Alexander promulgated the law for the protection of the state, Pavelic hastened to leave Yugoslavia. He went first to Austria where a few of the other notable "suspects" joined him, namely Branimir Jelic, Andrija Artukovic, Marko Dosen, Nadan Ruski, Gustav Percec, Mile Budak, Mladen Lorkovic, Eugen Kvaternik-Dido, et al., the greater part of whom, a few years later, became ignominiously celebrated by the blood-thirsty regime which they set up, worthy of Hitler's.

Thus came into being the two famous organizations known as the Ustashi (Insurgents) and the IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization). The latter's headquarters were at Sofia. This veritable "gang," composed of tried bandits, carried on in Serbia, especially in the Southern part, criminal attacks and murders, under pretext of protesting against the Treaty of Neuilly, which had given to Serbia the Macedonian territories freed from the Turks in 1913, and reconquered in 1918 by the Serbian armies.[7] Ivan Karadjoff, Strahil Razvigoroff and Boris Buneff were among the most renowned terrorist leaders, but every one of them was eclipsed by Ivan Mihailoff, known as Vantcha, a former law student of abnormal savagery whose very physical appearance bore the stigma of a degenerate criminal.[8]

It was with this sinister character—birds of a feather flock together—that Ante Pavelic, accompanied by Percec, concluded the agreement of the Ustashi with the IMRO on April 20, 1929 in the surroundings of Sofia; an agreement which had already been outlined in Vienna through an intermediary, Naum Tomalevski. Mihailoff, better known as Vantcha, in the paid service of Mussolini (that year the IMRO received 44 million liras from the Duce), took charge of the fate of his new allies

[7] These territories formed the very core of the national medieval Serbian empire before the Turkish occupation of the 15th century.

[8] At the request of Belgrade he had been outlawed by the Bulgarian government since 1922, a measure that was not enforced, for he circulated freely in Bulgaria, as well as in Austria, Hungary, and Italy.

by giving them access to the *Pactole* (symbol of riches). Apparently he capped their political education by a few good lessons in practical terrorism, which took place in a nice little farmhouse that looked innocently bucolic but which was filled, like an arsenal, with firearms and bombs. It was there, in those peaceful fields, that the men of the IMRO kept up their training as they drilled new recruits in the technical skills of the master.

Once initiated into the "right method," Pavelic went to Rome with an introduction from Mihailoff to Mussolini. He was entertained at the Villa Torlonia where the Duce and the ex-lawyer chatted together about important political questions, and of terrorism and finances. They got along so well that at the end of the conference an agreement was concluded and Pavelic found himself in possession of 25 million liras for initial expenses with the promise of additional liberal sums that would eventually follow.[9]

It did not take the Belgrade government very long to get wind of this transaction, so on July 17th of the same year (1929) it condemned Ante Pavelic to death for acts of high treason. So the leader of the Ustashi left Rome for Vienna, where his collaborators, who were professional adventurers and former Austro-Hungarian officers of Croat origin, were awaiting him.

In order to show the "Big Boss" that he had spent the liras wisely, they began by firing a few bombs onto Yugoslav territory, until one fine day Belgrade sent a vehement protest, almost an ultimatum, to Vienna, obliging the police to intervene. Pavelic was arrested but fled to the German frontier, from where he was able to reach Italy.

All this happened at a time when two of the maddest megalomaniacs of all history were arousing the admiration of their compatriots, brainwashed by intensive propaganda. These "supermen" tried to outdo each other in grandiose projects; one dreamed of resuscitating the German Holy Roman Empire, and the other the Imperium of the Caesars. And what was most remarkable, these two got on very well together, although their respective projects seemed hardly conciliatory from the standpoint of common sense, but such a thing was an absent quantity at that time.

The Duce, who was the reincarnation of Augustus of ancient times, considered that the Adriatic, like the Mediterranean, could

[9]Herve' Lauriere, *Assassians au Nom de Dieu* (Paris, 1959), p. 17.

be nothing but Roman: *mare nostrum;* and his idea was that even Dalmatia should return to the tutelage of the Roman she-wolf. But Yugoslavia had a strong army, under the command of the king who was ready to defend the country at all costs. By daring to rise up against the authority of Rome, this intrepid king had sealed his fate. He was to be sacrificed. This was the way stubborn monarchs were treated in the good old days of Neron and Caracallas!

The Duce did not hedge at committing crimes any more than did his illustrious predecessors. It might have been, too, that he had been given advice by his old "pal" Hitler, who was a partisan of "final solutions." In any case, Ante Pavelic, the Yugoslav fugitive, was a man who was ready for anything; he seemed like the right man for bringing this affair to a successful conclusion at the first favorable occasion.

While biding his time, he was given every facility for organizing terrorist groups on Italian territory. A villa was placed at his disposal at Pessaro, and when it had become too small to house the new recruits, he led his small, ever increasing band to the Fascist military camp of Borgotaro, near Bologne. He had agents who took charge of enlistments among the emigrant Croats in Italy, Germany, Belgium, and even in South America, where Branimir Jelic, one of his most devoted factotums was working for him.

Better yet! A brigade of agents from Ovra[10] assisted the Croats or, more exactly, were placed at their disposal. Its chief, Ercole Luigi Conti, was charged with safeguarding Pavelic and with supplying his men in arms and ammunition, as well as with false identification papers. All these activities were certainly carried on at a tremendous price, but the game was worth the cost. They invented a very ingenious procedure which would recoup a part of the liras destined to finance the Ustashi and at the same time strike a destructive blow to the currency of the adversary. Many of them had practiced more risky professions before going in for revolvers and bombs. Once in possession of the necessary utensils they could counterfeit Yugoslav currency to perfection. This counterfeit money was expedited in packages, and when all the forged "dinars" circulated throughout the country from Belgrade to Zagreb, not even the police could trace their origin to the Ustashi camp at Borgotaro.

* * *

[10] Fascist secret police.

When Pavelic had his final interview with Mihailoff near Sofia, he was accompanied by Percec. The latter had, in turn, been expelled from Vienna and had served as an officer in the Hungarian army. But Pavelic had not forgotten his devoted second. He had even boasted of his talents so eloquently to Mussolini that Percec obtained from Admiral Horthy, at that time Regent of Hungary, his reintegration, whereupon this brilliant individual continued to carry on his subversive activities. However, it had not seemed wise, as the proverb says "to put all eggs in the same basket." So Percec, instead of joining his boss in Italy, was kept in Hungary, where he could be useful to the associations who also carried on clandestine activities against the bordering states, and where there was a special committee of "Awakened Hungarians" consecrated to the "liberation" of Croatia.

Lieutenant Pavelic was therefore discreetly installed a few kilometers from the Yugoslav frontier at the farm of Yanka Puszta, whose name was to become famous all over the world at the time of the trial of King Alexander's assassins. There, as at Borgotaro, were congregated, not always of their own free will, tramps, vagabonds and ruffians of Croatian origin, as well as some Bulgarians who had become indoctrinated with terrorist ideas. At times, however, there were some recruits who rose up in revolt, but the Hungarian police took charge of either getting them back into line or else liquidating them altogether.

The head-instructors at Yanka Puszta were Hungarian officers: Marton, Mecger, Klar, and later on, Balenovicz.

This was a strange sort of farm where there was not the slightest sign of clover, wheat, barley or cattle, and no farming implements of any kind, but where, instead, the cellars and attics were overflowing with arms and ammunition, equipment, bombs and, in general, everything that was needed for exterminating the neighbors, either individually or collectively. There were classes in target practice, and the peasants in the surrounding countryside could hear the cracking of machine guns and parabellums all day long. It was reported that the riddled targets represented an effigy of Alexander of Yugoslavia. It was Vlado Georgieff, known as Cernozemski, the most skillful of the sharp-shooters, who was chosen to be the King's assassin.

The Yugoslav government protested, but in answering *note verbale* of 26 April, 1934, the Hungarian government said:

The most careful examination of the fact adduced by the Royal Yugoslav Legation has not brought anything to light which can serve as justification for such a charge. The Royal Hungarian Ministry does not question that incidents may have occured from time to time, which were in reality due to the fact that the Hungarian Government agents against whom the conduct referred to is alleged were merely the dupes of the different malefactors in question—which is not surprising having regard to the well-known nefarious practices of the latter.

At the same time, the Yugoslav Government was informed that some considerable time before the receipt of the *note verbale* from the Legation, the Hungarian Government had taken the necessary steps for the evacuation of Yugoslav political refugees from Yanka Puszta, a farm leased by them some time before.

The existence of such a foyer of terrorism, so close to the frontier, incited Yugoslavia to send notes of protest to the Hungarian government several different times. The answer was invariably courteous and evasive: "After having scrupulously examined all the facts," so said the reply, "everything pointed to the complete innocence of the Hungarian functionaries who, it must be acknowledged, might have been duped by ill-omened methods." In a last reply, contained in the verbal note, No. 1211/pol. 1934 of April 26, 1934, Budapest acknowledged having "taken the necessary steps to force the political refugees and Yugoslav emigrants out of Yanka Puszta . . ." [11]

If these alleged steps were really taken, it was indeed time, for six months later Alexander was assassinated with a revolver fired by the former champion of this noted lair at Yanka Puszta.

Borgotaro in Italy and Yanka Puszta in Hungary are particularly well known because of the important part they played in terroristic actions, but there existed in Europe many other Croatian clandestine organizations.

In Berlin, a group of refugees spread false news in the *Croatia Press* and the *Nezavisna Drzava Hrvatska* (The Independent State of Croatia).

In Belgium, at Seraing, the "Hrvatski Savez" (The Croatian Alliance) pursued similar methods and also recruited emigrants for the camp at Yanka Puszta.

At the doors of Yugoslavia, Trieste, Rijeka and Zadar were equally important centers of Ustashi activities, financed by Italian funds for the purpose of sabotage and issuing false papers and false currency.

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[11] *Survey of International Affairs, 1934* (Oxford, 1935) pp. 546-47.

The Ustashi circulated throughout Yugoslavia, dressed in clerical robes, while organizing their separatist movement and their terroristic conspiracy. The following constitutes a report of Mile Budak, one of Pavelic's first collaborators, who said in his speech of June 15, 1941 at Slavonski Brod: "Perhaps you have not exactly understood what really happened. The Ustashi came into the villages and towns, disguised in Franciscan clerical robes, bringing with them all that was needed for preparing the population. We had spread the spirit of Ustashi hatred in Croatia, and when the time came, our German and Italian friends found us not only organized, but also liberated." [12]

Those who tried to destroy the efforts of Alexander by a propaganda of direct action had to struggle even harder, for the King, in spite of internal difficulties, had succeeded in consolidating the state on the international level. Since 1927, when a friendship treaty had been concluded with France, the relationship between the two countries had become more and more cordial. The Balkan Entente, created by the King, was also developing. On February 9, 1934 Yugoslavia, Greece, Roumania and Turkey mutually guaranteed the security of their respective frontiers by the pact of Athens. Thus a stronger and stronger barrier was raised against Germano-Italian expansion in central Europe and the Balkans, and it was possible that even Bulgaria might eventually adhere to this defensive pact. It was then that Rome and Berlin decided that the time had come for immediate action.

It should be mentioned that there had been previous attempts to get rid of Alexander the year before. In December, 1933 an attack had been perpetrated against him in Zegreb. But the man appointed to carry it out, Peter Oreb, an Ustashi who was to receive 500,000 liras for his exploit, never succeeded in his plans.

This failure was keenly regretted at the Palace Venezia, so the Duce personally entrusted his son-in-law, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Galeazzo Ciano, with the responsibility of the next attempt, to be sure of crowning it with success.

Count Ciano, who presided over the foreign relations of Mussolini's Italy, consulted all the necessary experts. Thus it was that Senator Bocini, head of the Ovra, and Antonio Cortese, director of the political department of the Ministry of Foreign

[12] *Novi List* (Zagreb), June 16, 1941.

Affairs, lent a hand for this patriotic undertaking. Besides all the prestige and advantages of their positions, they had large sums of money at their disposal. All that remained was to await just the right occasion.

They did not have long to wait. At the end of the summer of 1934 it was rumored that King Alexander was ready to undertake a diplomatic trip. He would go first to Bulgaria and then to France. Decidedly this would be the time to act. A secret conference united the Fascist organizers and the heads of specialized workers and accomplices, such as Pavelic and Vantcha Mihailoff, at Ciano's Ministry. All the details of the next criminal attempt were hotly debated, first of all the right place. Mihailoff proposed Sofia. But Ciano, as well as Bocini and Cortese, feared that King Boris (son-in-law of the King of Italy and an ally of Mussolini) would also risk being killed as he sat beside King Alexander in the same car.

Pavelic insisted that France was the right place and he was backed by the Italians, who thought that if the deed were accomplished there the murder would take on much more significance.

Already, for months, a violent campaign against French-Yugoslav friendship had been carried on in the Italian press. France would naturally have to contradict the gossip so characteristic of trans-alpine journalists, and what the *Giornale d'Italia* called "the bellicose preparations of Serbia," clearly meaning the barrier behind which defenses were being raised to thwart the ambitions of Rome and Berlin. The two capitals had no illusions as to the success of intimidating manoeuvers. France evidently would not have the slightest desire to disavow the action of her dear and faithful ally. Therefore the occasion should be seized. The confident friendship that reigned between the two countries could be broken by assassinating Alexander on French territory. According to the old adage, it would be "like killing two birds with one stone."

Once the principle of the agreement was adopted, the conspirators were summoned to the Villa Torlonia by Mussolini, and were given the final instructions by this infallible genius—"Il Duce a sempre raggione"—as could be read in Italy in gigantic letters on all the walls. According to the plan, conceived by this great man, the King's assassination would be followed by a revolt in Croatia, fomented by Pavelic's friends and fol-

lowers, and by an uprising of the "comitadjis" of Mihailoff in Macedonia.

With all these connivances of "high politics" in the country of Machiavelli, Mussolini was sure that in such a game the Roman would prove equal to the illustrious Florentine.

Once assembled at the Continental Hotel in Rome, the murderers chose their parts. The "leader" ordered to shoot the King after his landing at Marseille, was the Bulgarian Vlada Georgieff, known as Cernozemski, the ex-champion of Yanka Puszta, who had already proved what he could do by killing two members of parliament at Sofia. Eugen Kvaternik-Dido, the accomplice of Pavelic, was to be with him, just before the attack only, although he had not as yet been able to record a murder on his slate, but who within a few years, as Head of the Police Department at Zagreb in the Independent State of Croatia, would not be able to count the number of his victims. Three other Ustashi—Kralj, Pospisil and Raic—were to be members of the party.

Since Alexander was to go to London after his visit to Paris, precautions were taken to have a second team on the alert. Therefore Andrija Artukovic, with a few of his acolytes, would go there and be ready for the assassination in case Cernozemski, in France, had missed his aim.

Naturally, all the conspirators were to travel with false identification papers and spurious passports furnished by Luigi Conti of the Ovra. Cernozemski even had two, one Czech, in the name of Suck, and the other Hungarian, in the name of Keleman. Raic, for this occasion, was rebaptized Benes. In this way the French would be inclined to think that the King's assassin was a relative of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Amply provided with liras and francs, the band, in order to cover up their tracks, went by way of Austria, then Switzerland to Paris. Because the Gare de Lyon was being strictly guarded because of the arrival of Alexander, the Ustashi avoided it by getting off at Fontainebleau and taking another road to Paris.

On October 6th they all met for the last time in a small neighborhood restaurant. The team from then on was subdivided. Pospisil and Raic stayed in Paris, held, as it were, "in reserve" in case the assassination failed at Marseille. They were to aim at the King during his visit to the Palace at Versailles. Cernozemski, Kvaternik, Mijo Kralj, and Stana Godina (who had come from Bologne and who had joined the group at Lausanne) took the train that same night for Aix-en-Provence, just 18

kilometers from Marseille. Equipped with revolvers, machine guns, ammunition and grenades by a mysterious blond woman, they spent two nights there in the Modern Hotel. The woman, by the name of Stana, pretended to be Czech but no trace of her in the subsequent inquest was ever discovered. All was now in readiness. Kvaternik and Godina, leaving their two accomplices there, went on to Turin where, with Pavelic, they were to await the outcome.

On October 9, 1934, the Yugoslav destroyer *"Dubrovnik"* anchored in the Vieux Port of Marseille. Louis Barthou, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, accompanied by the local authorities, had come to the Quai des Belges to welcome the sovereign-friend, acclaimed by a dense crowd held back by a cordon of police which, however, seemed somewhat small considering the importance of the occasion. The Yugoslav police, who had preceded their King by several days, had even expressed their anxiety upon his arrival. They went so far as to advise him not to disembark. But Alexander paid no heed and decided to take the risk. After the royal launch had drawn up to the wharf the procession started to form in line. The King and Louis Barthou took their places side by side in a car preceded by guards on horseback. Scarcely had they reached the Boulevard of the Cannebiere when a man broke through the crowds shouting: "Vive le Roi," while firing four pistol shots at Alexander and the Minister. Beaten down by the sword of Colonel Piollet, who was riding beside the car, the assassin was immediately trampled to death by the crowds. Pavelic had indeed chosen the right man for the killing; the King and Louis Barthou were mortally wounded. The news was announced to the masses standing before the City Hall with the flag at half mast.

Seeing that the fate of Cernozemski had been sealed on the spot, his accomplice, Kralj, ran back in haste to his hotel, and abandoning his machine gun and the grenades which were found soon after, he fled by train to Fontainebleau. The police and the secret service, however, had been alerted throughout France. Kralj had to show his papers and then his false Czech passport. All of a sudden, seized with fear, he lost his head and tried to hide in the forest. Two days later he was arrested at Melun. Pospisil and Raic, in Paris, met the same fate.

All three were condemned to life imprisonment for complicity in the assassination, but when the Germans entered France in 1940 they hurried to release them. The judicial proceedings

which followed clearly proved the culpability of Pavelic and Dido Kvaternik, son of Slavko, as organizers of the criminal attack, while they prudently awaited the verdict at Turino. They were condemned to capital punishment. But when the French government demanded their extradition, Mussolini naturally refused. He affected being offended and even had the audacity to warn the Belgrade government that he considered any reference to Italy concerning this affair as a *casus belli.*

The crime, however, failed to produce the desired effect which the Duce, Regent Horthy, and the Croatian terrorists were waiting for. The King's "enemies, as well as his friends in Yugoslavia, were ready to regard his *post mortem,* as a martyr of his political faith. . . . The reactions to King Alexander's death in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljanja, testified to the reality of Yugoslav national sentiment." [13]

The second objective at which the instigators were aiming by committing this assassination was not attained either. The friendship between Yugoslavia and France was not altered by the tragedy at Marseille. Both countries remained faithful to the alliance forged on the battlefield of the First World War; an alliance which threats from the Axis against European peace rendered even more necessary than before.

These threats were already such that the League of Nations, on receiving the complaints of Yugoslavia, by unanimous resolution condemned international terrorism as a threat to peace and security, but failed to hold the Hungarian government responsible for the preparation of the criminal attack. Budapest got out of it by acknowledging that its functionaries might have been guilty of certain "negligences" concerning the control of the Croatian emigrants and that disciplinary sanctions had been taken.

This unhappy compromise was to be followed by many others, and peace could not be saved.

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[13] *Survey of International Affairs* (Oxford, 1934), p. 550.

Chapter II

Regency, Concordat and the Tripartite Pact

KING PETER II was only a child of eleven when his father was assassinated. A Regency was instituted in accordance with King Alexander's will, presided over by Prince Paul.

All the dissension, suspended but for a short time, began once more, and with greater intensity. For the parliamentary elections of May 5, 1935, an opposition bloc was formed, grouping Radicals, Democrats, the Serbian Agrarian party, the Croatian Peasant party, the Independent Democrats, the Catholic Slovene party, and the Yugoslav Moslem party. The head of the government, Bosko Jevtic, could not maintain his position and was succeeded by the economist, Milan Stojadinovic. This professor of economics obtained very satisfactory results from an economical and financial point of view. Politically speaking, he was able to rally the Radicals, the Catholic Slovenes and the Yugoslav Moslem party to his government. But in spite of the negotiations at Brezice, in 1936 and in January 1937, with the head of the Croatian Peasant party, Vlatko Macek, the latter refused to lend his support.

Stojadinovic thought he could reduce this systematic opposition, so destructive to the country, by making substantial concessions to the Catholic Church. He nourished the hope, considering the voting of the Concordat, concluded during the lifetime of Alexander and ratified by the Jeftic cabinet, that he could persuade the Catholic Church in Croatia to abandon its hostile attitude toward the state and the government. This project, drawn up secretly, caused an immediate and intense feeling in all circles as soon as its existence became known, resulting in violent polemics.[1] The Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as other churches, reproached the government for adhering to the terms of the Concordat which granted to the Catholic Church privileges and guarantees which they themselves did not enjoy. They believed that this was a violation of the constitutional principle of religious equality.

The Concordat between Yugoslavia and the Vatican was dis-

[1] The public knew about the signing only after someone had given it to Serbian church officials, who made it public.

cussed a great deal in the domestic as well as in the foreign press. It seems that the preliminary draft of the Concordat, drawn up by a Yugoslav Commission as a basis for negotiations, was rejected by the Vatican from the very beginning. It was rejected because the Italian Fascist regime had just come into power, and Pope Pius XI did not want to provoke any suspicion on Mussolini's part by opening any negotiations with Yugoslavia. It was only after Mussolini had suppressed all opposition and had consolidated his regime that secret negotiations between the Quirinal and the Vatican were initiated in order to solve this "fabulous" question. Therefore, Pope Pius XI consented to begin the official negotiations which were to be held in June 1925, and the Yugoslav delegation left for Rome.

But beside this delegation, Archbishop Bauer of Zagreb, with members of the leadership of the Croatian Catholic Episcopacy, also went to Rome. The purpose of their sojourn there became clear from the beginning.

During the first meeting of the Yugoslav and Vatican delegations, Mgr. Borgodini Duca said that the Bishops had discussed the Yugoslav draft of the Concordat and had reached conclusions which had been transmitted to the Vatican. The Bishops had asked the Holy See not to sign the Concordat before a number of their ecclesiastical and political conditions were fulfilled, which actually meant the return to conditions which prevailed in 1918 in Austria-Hungary. He further said that the Holy See had accepted the conditions submitted by the Bishops, and offered his counter-proposal to the Concordat, on his own responsibility, independent of the corresponding Congregations and the Holy See, and thus the discussions were resumed.

In fact, what the Vatican and the higher clergy wanted to attain by means of these negotiations was the negation of Yugoslav sovereignty, and to seek a privileged position for the Catholic Church in the country.

This inimical stand on the part of the Vatican and its higher clergy concerning the Concordat was discussed during a session of the Yugoslav Ministerial Council, at which time the Minister of Education, Stjepan Radic, as the head of the strongest Croat party, spoke with determination against the hostile attitude of the Vatican and its clergy. He accused them of clerical pretentiousness, and asked their full respect for the sovereignty of the state.

Thus, through Stjepan Radic's intervention, the negotiations

with the Vatican were postponed but not discontinued. As a result of this and soon after, at the time when the question of St. Geronimo in Rome was brought up, the Vatican intensified its hostile stand toward Yugoslavia and its sovereign rights.[2]

That the disputed Concordat of 1936 gave the Catholic Church a privileged position was recognized by Archbishop Bauer and his vicar, Stepinac, in a declaration on March 31, 1936: "The Catholic Church is not at all opposed to the Serbian Orthodox Church also receiving all that it perhaps does not now have and which is guaranteed to the Catholic Church by the Concordat.[3]

This condescending attitude of the Roman prelature could not but irritate the Serbian Orthodox clergy and to arouse a feeling of frustration. The political opposition seized upon this occasion and added fuel to the fire. Alarming news was circulated throughout the country, holding the Concordat responsible for the serious condition of the Serbian Patriarch, Varnava, whose illness had grown much worse.

The situation became even more precarious after street demonstrations by the Orthodox Serbs were prohibited by the authorities. The agitators refused to listen and the police force, in order to impress them, resorted to violence. Church banners were trampled on and there were many wounded, among them the Bishop of Sabac, Simeon, whose bishop's crown was demolished and thrown to the ground. "Such sights have never before been witnessed, even under the Turks," was the cry that rose up from the people.

The attitude of the Croatian Peasant party was expressed by its leader, Vlatko Macek, who made the following statement in May 1937 to the correspondent of the *Kuryer Warsawsky:* "We remain quite indifferent to the question because the Vatican is trying to conclude the Concordat with the Serbian Orthodox government and not with the Roman Catholic population of Croatia." [4]

King Alexander had early desired the settlement of ecclesiatical matters with the Holy See, and in conformity with this, negotiations for concluding a Concordat had begun as early as 1920, and its formulation was ready by the end of 1921, but conditions were not suitable just at that time for finalizing it. However, the

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[2] Sima Simic, *Vatikan protiv Jugoslavije* (The Vatican against Yugoslavia), (Titograd, 1958), pp. 16-17.

[3] *Ibid.* Also see Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen* (Zagreb, 1948), p. 440.

[4] Sima Simic, *op. cit.*, p. 139; Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 447.

year 1925 seemed to be favorable for its conclusion, since Stjepan Radic, at that time the leader of the Croatian Peasant party, was a member of the Government and Minister of Education. The Government was made up of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, representing their strongest parties. During a session of the Government, Voja Janic, who was Minister of Justice, submitted a report on the Concordat to the Assembly with the purpose of initiating the discussions which were to lead toward final acceptance. However, directly after the end of Janic's report, Stjepan Radic got up to speak and strongly objected against its proposal, stating that the Concordat was too clericalistic and that the Croats would never accept it; he practically reproved Janic—a Serb and an Orthodox—of being too clericalistic in proposing such a Concordat.[5]

In general, it can be said that all religions were against the Concordat in 1936, including the majority of the Catholic Croats. In a publication called, *Javnost,* edited by Niko Bartulovic who was a Catholic-Croat, an article was published analyzing the Concordat, and in trying to prove that a Concordat of this kind was detrimental to the state, it said:

> It is detrimental because it opens the doors for the Catholic Church to enter schools, homes, and among those willing and unwilling, actually everywhere; giving it control over everything, whereas the State is deprived of any rights of interfering in any of the Catholic establishments or organizations.
>
> It is detrimental because it paves the way to clericalism which has never made any country happy.
>
> It is detrimental because it gives the Catholic Church broad and exceptional rights by means of which it is acquiring a privileged position in comparison to other religions in the State.
>
> It is wrong because it prompts other religions within the country to demand for themselves equal rights and privileges enjoyed by the Catholic Church, which means that the state is forced at the point of a knife to give concessions of all kinds to all of them.
>
> It is wrong because it would not be politically opportune for our state to burden itself at the present moment with controversial ecclesiastic matters.
>
> And finally, it is wrong because in word and in spirit, it is against the stabilization of present conditions in the political, social and economic sense, and instead of restricting some ecclesiastical rights, it is on the contrary forced to increase them and prompts other religions to demand the same rights.
>
> The question of settling religious matters in our country is of

[5] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.,* p. 437.

great significance to the state. Therefore, the Concordat should be looked upon from the state's standpoint as well as from perspective of its own aims. But if looked upon only from the religious side, it should not be accepted. The state has the right and duty to organize religious matters within its own borders from its own way of looking at them and for its own good ends.[6]

Viktor Novak, Professor of History and a Croat Catholic, wrote about the Concordat and especially about the clause concerning church services in the Slavic language, the following:

> For the long lasting development of the Croat Glagolica, i.e., the holding of Church services in the old Slavic Language, this was one of the greatest and hardest offenses, intensified by the tragic silence of the Croats.
>
> If the Concordat were to be legalized, such as it stands, it would mean that the already atrophied Glacolica in its oasis would be doomed to die, which would lead toward a point of no return, and that in the very near future. However, the worst of all things is the *signum temporia,* i.e., the lack of political maturity of our times. Who will take the responsibility for this before history? Will it be the people or its "spiritual leaders"? Will it be the Government? If so, which one? Who will be the one to speak the last words at the end of the tragic trilogy of the Croat "Glagolica"—"La Tragedia e finita." [7]

The hardest blow against the Concordat that came from the Croats was, however, the one given by the Democratic Peasant Coalition, whose President was Vlatko Macek, and which was formed from the Croat Peasant party and the Independent Democratic party. The first purely Croat, and the second having Serbs in a majority (but in itself very small). The Executive Committee of the Peasant Democratic Coalition took a very negative stand against the Concordat during meetings held on January 24 and 25, 1937. It was said in its Resolution that the Concordat which was signed between the Vatican and Yugoslavia, was now being used to harrangue the Orthodox masses—while on the other hand the pastoral letter issued by the Catholic Bishops proposed a Fascist arrangement of the State.[8]

It is obvious that only a small minority of the Croat people were protesting against the non-legalization of the Concordat.

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[6] Politicus, "The General Characteristics of our Concordat," *Javnost* (Belgrade, 1937), No. 9, pp. 156-159.

[7] Viktor Novak, "The Tragic Trilogy of the Croat 'Glagolism,'" *Javnost,* No. 9, pp. 160-168.

[8] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.,* pp. 446-447.

These were the Croat ultramontanes and "Starcevites" with extreme nationalist inclinations.

In parliament, after somewhat agitated debates, the project was adopted on July 23, 1937 by a vote of 166 to 129. That same evening, during a dinner given by the president of the government for the deputies who had voted favorably, all at once the bells of all the Serbian Orthodox churches started tolling the death knell of the Patriarch, Varnava.

Such a coincidence made a great impression on public opinion.

The stormy atmosphere that hung over the entire country forced the government to postpone the debates before the Senate until sometime later, and ultimately the whole project was dropped. Subsequently, according to Yugoslav newspapers, Prime Minister Milan Stojadinovic declared that "the Concordat with the Vatican, in such a form, will not be submitted for approval to the Assembly. In any further settlement of relations with the Vatican and in regulating its position with the Roman Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav Government will respect and enforce to the fullest extent the principles of equal rights of all legally acknowledged religions in the country, guaranteed by the Constitution and existing laws."

But the attitude of His Grace, Stepinac, coadjutor *cum jure successionis,* of Archbishop Bauer, was quite the opposite. Archbishop Bauer at eighty was on his deathbed when, on December 6, 1937, the Apostolic Nuncio of Belgrade, His Grace Pellegrinetti, on his way to Rome to be ordained Cardinal, passed through Zagreb. His Grace Stepinac went to greet the prelate at the station and in his address, made the following statement: "Rest assured, Excellency, and also assure the Holy Father, that any storm that threatens the ship of St. Peter's these days, will never alarm us." [9]

In pronouncing these words the bellicose coadjutor eloquently corroborated the legend of the "persecuted" Roman Catholic Church, and in so doing he concealed a truth which could be easily checked, i.e. the adoption of the Concordat was due to the favorable votes of the Serbian Orthodox deputies.

And so, ten days later, on December 16, 1937, Pope Pius XI duly informed of the incipient "tempest" which, according to His Grace, Stepinac, threatened the ship of St. Peter's, started to spread apocalyptic remarks during the consistory where the new

[9] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.,* p. 461.

cardinals, among whom was His Grace Pellegrinetti, were being consecrated: "The day will come," continued His Holiness, "when there will be many who will regret not having accepted fully, generously and efficaciously the great blessing offered to their country by Christ's Vicar, and offered not only to the ecclesiastical and religious body of the nation but, above all, to the political and social life, although His Holiness is loathe to make his business and his work a question of politics." [10]

The threat against Yugoslavia and the Serbian Orthodox Church, held responsible for the failure of the Concordat, was only too evident.

SPORAZUM (agreement) CVETKOVIC-MACEK

At the climax of the political and religious crisis of October 8, 1937, the parties of the Opposition signed a mutual agreement called "The Agreement of Farkasic." In case of an electoral victory, they proposed forming a government which would abolish the Constitution of 1931 and substitute another that would remain valid until the decisive vote.

In the election of December 11, 1938, the Opposition ticket received 1,364,524 votes, and that of the government 1,643,783, a small majority.

This slender success added to the unsettled situation in Europe, incited the Regency to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Croatian Peasant party, all the more necessary because Stojadinovic seemed to be drawing closer and closer to the Axis powers, while the Regency tried to preserve a friendly relationship with France and England. Already on March 25, 1937, a political and economic agreement had been signed with Count Ciano for a "sincere and lasting friendship" between the two countries.

Prince Paul, after the elections of 1938, dismissed his government leader and replaced him with Dragisa Cvetkovic, whose mission was to discover a common ground of understanding with the Croatian Peasant party. Negotiations for this purpose began on March 3, 1939 but they were destined to drag on, for at the same time, Macek, playing a double game, started negotiating with Ciano, through his agents, Carnelutti and Count Bombelles.

According to the diary kept by Ciano, which was published after the war, Macek was ready to organize an uprising in Croatia

[10] *Osservatore Romano*, December 17, 1937.

for which he would ask help from Italy in forming a Croatian republic that would eventually unite with Italy.

On March 21, 1939, Ciano received Carnelutti and gave him instructions to save time by prolonging negotiations with Belgrade. Bombelles, on the other hand, after an interview on April 5th with the Ustashi leader, Pavelic, paid a visit to Ciano and then returned to Zagreb to see Macek before going back to Rome.

After his second audience with Carnelutti, Count Ciano wrote the following in his diary on May 26, 1939, regarding their conversation:

> I had a meeting with Carnelutti, who had just returned from Zagreb. He confirmed to me that Macek had firmly decided to discontinue any negotiations for an agreement with Belgrade, and to support the uprising. We agreed upon the following points:
> 1—Italy will finance Macek's Croat uprising with 20,000,000 Dinars;
> 2—He accepts the responsibility of starting the uprising within four to six months;
> 3—He will invite the Italian troops at once to insure peace and order;
> 4—Croatia will proclaim its independence and confederation with Rome. It will have its own Government, but foreign and military affairs will be one with Italy . . .
> The Duce has read the report and agrees with it.

At this same moment negotiations with Cvetkovic reached a dead end because of Macek's inacceptable demands in claiming the non-Croatian provinces and, above all, certain parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such exigencies met with the vehement opposition of the Serbs of both religions, Orthodox and Moslem. The leader of the latter, Dr. Mehmed Spaho, Minister of Communications, threatened to resign if the Regency consented to dividing up Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Macek denies this in his autobiography,[11] but the events which took place and Macek's atttitude toward them, lead one to believe that Count Ciano was telling the truth. One is forced to make such a conclusion because of the way in which he left the Government, in which he was Vice-President. He arrived in Zagreb on April 10, 1941, and appealed to the Croat people over the radio to accept loyally the Independent State of Croatia, created by Hitler and Mussolini, and to help their new govern-

[11] Vlatko Macek, *In Struggle for Freedom* (New York, 1957), pp. 186-187 and 189-190.

ment. He did this seven days before the Yugoslav government signed the act of capitulation. This is considered an act of betrayal, punishable by law in any organized country.

Mussolini, through the intermediary of a Swiss bank, granted the twenty million dinars needed to finance the uprising in Croatia. But a new development, the sudden death of Dr. Mehmed Spaho, head of the Moslems in Bosnia-Herzegovina, on June 29, 1939, facilitated the conclusion of an agreement between Macek and the Regency in Belgrade, annexing certain parts of this province to Croatia. Public opinion was convinced that the Moslem leader had been poisoned.

The concession, thus obtained, and perhaps also Berlin's somewhat repugnant attitude on seeing Croatia fall entirely within the Italian orbit, caused Macek to abandon his project. Consequently on August 26, 1939, a compromise *in extremis* intervened at Belgrade. By the *Sporazum* (agreement) signed by the Croatian Peasant party, Croatia was granted an extensive political and financial autonomy, with its own government and its own assembly. A Ban (governor) represented the royal power in Zagreb, while Belgrade controlled foreign policy, national defense, finance in part, the postal service, the telegraph, telephone and other communications, and, in general, interests of a purely national character.

The autonomous affairs of the Banovina of Croatia comprised: Interior Administration, Justice, Public Education, Agriculture, Forestry and Mining, Finance, Construction, Health, and Social Policy.

The principle of a centralist state was therefore definitely abandoned, and Yugoslavia, thenceforeward, adopted a federalist formula, never very clearly defined.

The very day that the agreement was signed a new Cvetkovic government was formed in Belgrade, with Vlakdo Macek taking over the vice-presidency.

The *Sporazum* explicitly counted on its text being ratified by parliament, but realizing that this body would not give a favorable vote and that the *Sporazum* would be rejected, the Cvetkovic-Macek government dissolved parliament immediately, and on August 26th abolished the electoral law, as well as all other political laws, which had become obsolete. In reality, the Constitution of 1931 survived. Thenceforward the Cvetkovic-Macek government, by failing to organize the promised free elections, agreed to in the *Sporazum*, governed without a parlia-

ment, and thus it became quite evident that the Croatian Peasant party, instead of fighting for a real democracy, had fought only for the aggrandizement of Croatia's territory. Thus it found itself enlarged by nine districts from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and two from the province of Srem, which is to say, 13,809 square kilometers, populated by 656,000 souls, the majority being non-Croatian. Dating from this time, the population of the Croatian Banovina amounted to 4 million 500 thousand inhabitants, among whom were 3 million 180 thousand Catholics, around 1,000,000 Orthodox Serbs, 204,000 Moslem Serbs, and the remainder composed of diverse faiths.

The Serbs, Orthodox and Moslem, who were thus disposed of by a mere scratch of the pen, without being previously and publicly consulted, vigorously protested against this arbitrary action, and straightway began to organize a resistance. The *Sporazum* had been the cause of general discontent in the country; shortly after it had been signed there was a rumor of Croatian hegemony. And this was not exaggerated, according to a confidential letter at that time addressed to all the organizations of the Peasant party in Croatia, and especially points 13 and 15 of this letter, which gave precise details on the attitude expected of the adherents. Point 13 was expressed as follows: "It must always be emphasized that the situation created by the *Sporazum* represented only the first phase toward the realization of our program of to-morrow. This is the reason why we should always speak of a free and independent Croatia. . . ." [12]

Point 15 specifies: "In following these instructions we shall profit from every circumstance for the realization of our goal. The Versailles Treaty is about to crumble and Yugoslavia was one of its artificial creations. Our leaders will vacillate between the powers of the axis and the democracies. We have men who will side with either one or the other of these political systems. Our principal pre-occupation is the disintegration of Yugoslavia. To accomplish this we can count on the Catholic Church on one side, and International Communism on the other." [13]

Radic's successor, Macek, "reoriented the Croatian Peasant party into a rabid nationalist movement which, by becoming increasingly bold, became an active factor for the growing political tension inside Yugoslavia. From this period onward,

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[12] *Amerikanski Srbobran* (Pittsburgh), September 6, 1948.
[13] *Ibid.*, September 7, 1948.

separatism became the key-word of Croat Nationalism, with the result that the latter began increasingly to play into the hands of the Catholic Hierarchy and thus into those of the Vatican." [14]

Cynical as it appears, the instructions of the Croat Peasant party explained the situation precisely. The Roman Catholic Church and Moscow, though from different angles, agreed perfectly on this point.[15] As early as 1925, George Dimitrov, then general secretary of the Comintern, before a special commission of that body consecrated to the Yugoslav question, made the following statement: "No serious Communist work will be possible in the Balkans until Yugoslavia disintegrates. So Yugoslavia must be made to disintegrate by our helping the Separatist movements there." [16]

For Dimitrov, of Bulgarian origin, the problem was to form a greater Macedonia by uniting the parties of this region which had been annexed by Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria. This new state, controlled by Bulgaria, would then become a sort of "springboard" for Russia, which would give the Soviet access to the Adriatic for the control of the Straits of Otranto, and therefore of all of the Eastern Mediterranean seabord. It was only on November 26, 1942, during the session of AVNOJ (Anti-Fasisticko Vece Narodnog Oslobodjanja Jugoslavije, or Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) at Bihac, that the Yugoslav Communist party gave up the idea of a complete disintegration of its country and declared itself in favor of federating the small provincial entities.

THE COMING OF THE WAR

The signing of the *Sporazum* gave the signal for the "purging" of the administrative staffs in Croatia, which had now become autonomous and known as the *Banovina Hrvatska*. This was realized by direct methods, with Serbian functionaries expelled or obliged to leave because of vexatious treatment and, above all, because of threatening letters. They were falling in the streets of Zagreb by the dozens, struck down by assassins whom the police "never succeeded" in discovering. Yet no one was unaware that the guilty ones belonged to the semi-military

[14] Avro Manhattan, *Terror over Yugoslavia* (London, 1953), p. 35.

[15] Still more recently, on August 11, 1951, tbe official paper of the English Catholics (*The Tablet*) spoke of the necessity of disintegrating Yugoslavia ("dis-establishment of Yugoslavia").

[16] Stepben Clissold, *Whirlwind* (London, 1949), pp. 101-102.

organization (Croatian Civilian Defense) affiliated with the Peasant party of Macek.[17]

A boycott was organized of Serbian shops and everything that was Serbian. In all places where mixed elements, that is Serbs and Croats, lived, so-called "economic societies" were formed which were called "Each One to Himself." The purpose of these organizations was to boycott all Serbian economic life.

Hrvatski Dnevnik, the newspaper of the Croat Peasant party, published the following in its issue of August 28, 1939: "Croatia will not be able to keep on its territory certain people [meaning Serbs] who have no confidence in the Croat people; beside Croatia will not be able to give them pensions, because they do not deserve them."

The Croats went so far in their provocations and hostility that the Croat municipality of Privlaka even discharged Steva Nikolic, a dog catcher, because he was an Orthodox Serb: Even the Government newspaper *Vreme* (Belgrade), published an article from Osijek on November 26, 1939, which said the following regarding the dismissal of Serbs: "The dismissal of Serbs from city employment and city enterprises is continuing. Beside the dismissals which have been reported recently, seven more Serbian workers were dismissed from the city's street car enterprise, and now the number of discharged people totals up to thirty."

All these regrettable and unpardonable measures were the direct consequence of the fascist and Ustashi influence which had taken control of the Croatian Peasant party. During a meeting of this party at Split, August 23, 1937, the secretary of the party said: "I can promise you that dawn is breaking over sovereign Croatia, and independence will follow. Once Croatia is free then you can settle up your accounts for those years since 1918."

It is very obvious that this was an appeal for the kind of violence so characteristic of all racists.

A supplementary clause makes it clear that this declaration was not just fortuitous but part of a political and systematic propaganda. Ivan Pernar, then deputy of the Croatian Peasant party (and who today resides in the United States), was one of the closest collaborators of Vlatko Macek. In an address he made on

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[17] "Individual Serbs were murdered by terrorists, and Macek took no strong measures against the guilty. . . . Macek never abandoned his aim of a democratic, peasant-ruled progressive federation of all South Slavs. But this dream receded while Macek left freedom to those who were sabotaging his ideas, sabotaging Croatian democracy and sabotaging the Yugoslav state." (Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars* (Cambridge, 1945), pp. 239-240.

October 10, 1937, at Nasice, he also threatened that "all foreigners would be expelled within twenty-four hours and sent to Tsar Dusan's empire (alluding to the Kingdom of Serbia during the fourteenth century). Needless to add he was making a direct appeal for the expulsion of the Serbs from Croatia.

The Croatian Peasant party's newspaper, the *Hrvatski Dnevnik* (September 20, 1940), published the following article filled with praise for the clever Nazi Reich:

> The Croatians are a people, who, regarding their relationship with Germany, had no need to be re-oriented, for they were never hostile. We have always respected the rights of a great people such as the German people, and we were persuaded that this people, thanks to their great sense of organization, would rise again after the heavy blow dealt to them by the treaty of Versailles. Although Germany has never meddled with the internal policy of Yugoslavia, we have noticed with satisfaction all that has appeared in the German press, and which on various occasions has shown great understanding for the position of the Croatian people and the role it has been given to play in this part of Europe. The signs of sympathy which Germany has given us have been spontaneous. (November 20, 1940.)

Hardly had Croatia become master of its fate than it began sinking into the mire of disorder, anarchy and corruption. Thus, when the Axis Powers began their attack on April 6, 1941, it had become the most vulnerable part of the whole country.

The war drew closer and closer to Yugoslav territory, and the Cvetkovic-Macek government did not possess the necessary authority to concentrate the forces of the country and prepare them for the great ordeal. Furthermore, the Germano-Italian pressure had become more seriously felt since the Pact of Steel (May 22, 1939). Once hostilities were started in Europe, Germany's repeated victories (her advance up to the national frontiers, and her presence in Hungary, Roumania and Bulgaria), with the Italians, at the same time, occupying all of Albania and attacking Greece, made a tremendous impression on the population. Despite the Francophile and Anglophile sympathies of the majority of the representatives, the government was gradually weaned away from the traditional friendly relationships. On February 14, 1941, Hitler, in order to help the Italian troops in their perilous situation on Greece, asked Belgrade, or rather *ordered* Belgrade, to permit the transportation of war material through Yugoslavia. On March 5th, Prince Paul had an interview with the Fuhrer at Berchtesgaden, where the conditions of a

tripartite pact were presented to him, bringing Yugoslavia into the Germano-Italian orbit. Hitler guaranteed the security of the Yugoslav frontiers just as he had done with Czechoslovakia, and Ribbentrop solemnly declared that Germany had no political interests whatsoever in the Balkans. Furthermore, a part of Greek Macedonia, with the port of Salonika, would be ceded to Yugoslavia.

From the 18th to the 20th of March, the Council of the Regency deliberated its adhesion to the Tripartite Pact. The Serbian representatives were divided, but the Croats, Slovenes and Moslems gave their acceptance. It should be noted that His Grace Stepinac, on his return from Rome, at the beginning of the month, informed Vlatko Macek, vice-president of the Council of Ministers, that the fascist government had a plan already drawn up for dividing Yugoslavia. On March 6th, an agreement was reached between them to establish a spiritual and temporal uniformity of viewpoints concerning Croatian policy in general.

On March 25th, Dragisa Cvetkovic, head of the government, and Dr. Cincar Markovic, his minister of foreign affairs, signed the Tripartite Pact in the presence of Hitler at the Belvedere in Vienna.[18] But when the announcement was made, the people of Belgrade rose up in protest crying: "A war rather than a pact!" (Bolje rat, nego pakt!) These proud words were pronounced by the Patriarch Gavrilo: "If we are to live, let us live in liberty, and if we are to die let us die for liberty!" On March 27th, at dawn, a *coup d'etat,* organized by Serbian officers and the garrison at Belgrade, overthrew the government and the Regency. A coalition government, comprising all remnants of the democratic parties, was formed that morning, with General Dusan Simovic as president of the Council of Ministers. Peter II was to sit on the throne five months before he was of age.

That evening of the same day, Prince Paul, first Regent, took the train for Slovenia but was stopped on the way and advised to return to Belgrade. He got off, however, at Zagreb, where he consulted Dr. Vlatko Macek, vice-president of the fallen government, and Dr. Ivan Subasic, "ban" of Croatia, about the recent developments.

Macek sought to influence Prince Paul to take up the resistance. He argued that he was master of the situation in all the Croatian

[18] The only good thing about the agreement was the Yugoslav government's refusal to accept Hitler's offer of a part of Greek territory.

provinces, having control of the Croatian troops, and he even summoned the Chief of Police of Zagreb, Rikard Vikert, asking him to guarantee that he would be able to arrest General Nedeljkovic, commander of the region, in case he might be opposed to the plans. But the Prince, fearing that his attitude would be regarded as taking action in a rebellion against Peter II and inciting a civil war, advised Macek to rally around the government of General Simovic.[19] And it was Simovic who greeted Prince Paul the following day at the station in Belgrade, and accompanied him to the Ministry of War, where the Regent signed his abdication.

That same day, by special train, Paul reached the Greek frontier with his family, where the English were waiting to conduct him to Kenya, British colony in East Africa. This became his residence in exile where he would remain until after the war.

On April 4th, Macek, having received a guarantee that the *Sporazum* would be respected, finally accepted the vice-presidency in the new government, and returned once more to Belgrade.

Macek awaited Engineer Kosutic's return from Belgrade before going there, and wrote in his autobiography the following: "Kosutic was back in Zagreb on the morning of March 31. He brought good news as far as the new Government's willingness to grant more power to the Banovina of Croatia was concerned." [20] He was interested only in "more power for the Banovina of Croatia" but not in the tragic situation of Yugoslavia. Such a great patriot!

In his relations with Berlin and with the desire to serve Croatia, Macek was not too honest in matters concerning Yugoslavia. Probably influenced by a sense of guilt, he gave a naïve twist to this in his autobiography, stating: "Meanwhile Mittelhammer, the correspondent of the German DNB News Agency, transmitted to me the advice of the German Foreign Ministry to 'keep away from Belgrade.' " [21] This took place directly after Kosutic's return from Belgrade, which is March 31st. Then he went on speaking about the visit of Hitler's emissary from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "On the afternoon of April 3, just before I was to leave Zagreb, Maletke, a special emissary from von Ribbentrop, brought me a message that the time was

[19] Macek, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-218.
[20] Macek, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

at hand to sever Croatia from Serbia. I was offered German aid in carrying out this project. I answered that such a separation would be possible only through the medium of war, and that, therefore, I would undertake no such thing." [22]

Mittelhammer warned Macek on March 31st, "to keep away from Belgrade," which meant that Germany had decided already at that time to attack Yugoslavia. Maletke made his proposal to Macek on April 3, which confirms even more strongly that Germany's decision was final. This could have been precious information for Simovic, and there is not a doubt that it would have helped him very much if he had learned it at the same time that Macek did. The question actually is, did Macek fulfill his role of a loyal citizen toward his own country and did he transmit this information to his government, whose Vice-President he was? Even if his relations with Berlin were truly of a naïve nature, as he wishes to present them, there still remains the question of his loyalty to his own state.[23]

Meanwhile, immediately after the "Putsch" of March 27, 1941, in Belgrade, the Wilhelmstrasse discontinued relations with the Yugoslav Legation and strengthened them with the Ustashi abroad, at the head of which stood Branko Benzon, a doctor, who was working as a cardiologist at one of the Hospitals in Berlin. Since this group was not very strong, Benzon, in agreement with the Nazis, invited the Ustashi, Adrija Artukovic, who was in Slovakia, to Berlin, and he arrived by plane from Bratislava on April 9, 1941. The Nazis established these Ustashi in the well-known hotel, "Kaiserhof." In order to spread misinformation, the Nazis placed several radio broadcasts at the disposal of the Ustashi. This Ustashi group of emigrants consisted mainly of the following: Adrija Artukovic, Branko Benzon, Nicola Rusinovic, Vilko Riger, Ivan Derezic, Josip Mamic, Percevic, et al.

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[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

[23] There is ample evidence, from photographs and otherwise, that Macek and some of his close collaborators in the Peasant party were seeing German diplomats in Zagreb with fair frequency, which in itself may mean much or little.

CHAPTER III

The Fall of Yugoslavia and the Creation of the Satellite State of Croatia

THE TIME-TABLE of the Axis Powers called for the invasion of Russia in the spring of 1941. But Italy was having trouble subduing Greece. In order to provide the most effective help in Greece, Germany pressured the Yugoslav government to sign the Axis Pact. But Yugoslavia's adherence to the Pact was short-lived. A Serbian-led plot in the army overthrew the Regency Government and proclaimed Peter II king, although he was not yet of age. A united government was formed to cope with the crisis.

The *coup d'etat* in Belgrade caused a violent reaction in the countries of the Axis. On Sunday April 6th, at dawn, operation "Punishment" was launched. For two whole days, Goering's airplanes crushed Belgrade beneath a shower of bombs, burying 25,000 bodies in the ruins. The administration services, which were concentrated in the capital, were entirely paralyzed. This was a fatal blow to the defensive potential of the country.

King Peter and his government went to Montenegro from whence they flew to Jerusalem, and then on to London. Dr. Vlatko Macek, however, did not accompany them. Peter II has noted in his Memoirs[1] that the leader of the Croatian Peasant party came to see him on April 8th, informing him of his intention to return to Zagreb in order "to revive" the morale of the Croatian troops that had given up the struggle and disbanded. Indeed, there was no time to lose if this politician wished to instill a spirit of resistance in his compatriots against foreigners, having heretofore done everything he could to undermine it. But, as will be seen, he had entirely different plans in his head.

The army, whose mobilization had been sabotaged by a defeatist campaign, fought the best it could, but was ineffective against a numerically stronger and disproportionally armed enemy. The capitulation was signed on April 18, 1941. This rapid victory for the invading troops had been facilitated by the activities of

[1] *A King's Heritage, the Memoirs of King Peter II of Yugoslavia* (London, 1955), p. 81.

two "fifth columns" which had been organized in the country: the Croatian Ustashi for Italy, and the Germanic minority of the Banat for Germany.

The *Volksdeutscher,* as the latter were called, had been settled in this province by the court of Vienna in the eighteenth century for the purpose of Germanizing it and crowding out the Serbian and Roumanian inhabitants. This was done by vexatious methods, such as over-burdening them with taxes, and if they refused to pay, the imperial cavalry would set fire to the villages and massacre the leading citizens, while leaving the rest of the population to die in misery and in the cold.

The *Volksdeutscher,* who were more united, better organized and much richer than the Sudetan Germans of Czechoslovakia, welcomed the Hitlerian troops with enthusiasm and volunteered their services "en masse." They kept firearms hidden in their houses and one out of three had a machine gun. The German armored divisions found them excellent guides. They tracked down the Yugoslav patriots and submitted them to torture in the concentration camps.

It was they who formed the all too famous SS division, "Prince Eugen," and it was they who committed atrocities in the Serbian villages, totally exterminating the Jews of the Banat and the province of Srem, in collaboration with the Ustashi. However, they did not engage in mass persecution of the Serbs as did the Ustashi.

The latter, even before returning in "the foreigners' trucks," began their destructive activities. Already, on April 6th, while Belgrade was burning, Pavelic made the following proclamation from a clandestine broadcasting station: "Croatian soldiers, take up arms against the Serbian officers and soldiers! From now on we shall fight side by side with our new allies, the Germans and the Italians."

Then, on the 10th of April, while the German army was making its entry into Zagreb, which was all decked with flags, an old Austro-Hungarian Colonel, Slavko Kvaternik, a sworn Ustashi, having hastened back from Italy, announced over the radio the foundation of the "Independent State of Croatia." Prior to the announcement, Kvaternik had gone to Macek and asked him for a brief statement "so as to retain legal continuity of the leadership" and to preserve "peace and order." [2]

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[2] Kvaternik's testimony at trial of Archbishop Stepinac, October 5, 1946.

Then Dr. Vlatko Macek, vice-president of the former Yugoslav government, invested the new regime in the following terms:

« People of Croatia! Colonel Slavko Kvaternik, the leader of the National movement in the country, has today proclaimed the free and independent State of Croatia.

I appeal to the whole Croatian people to submit to the new Government; I appeal to all the members of the Croatian Peasant Party who hold positions in the Government, to collaborate sincerely with the new Government.[3] »

Since Yugoslavia did not capitulate until 18 April, this action of its Vice-Premier on 10 April was pure treason.

The American historian, L. S. Stavrianos, has written about the role of Dr. Macek:

Yugoslavia's future appeared hopeless indeed, Not only was the country mutilated and the people driven to wholesale massacres, but the prewar leaders had failed in their responsibility to provide guidance. This was especially true of Vladimir Macek, whose Peasant party still commanded the support of most of the Croatian peasants. Yet Macek withdrew from politics after advising his followers to obey the regime of the Ustashi. Yugoslavia thus became a hell of blood and torment and destructive hatreds.[4]

This appeal, coming as it did from a caitiff minister, although treacherous, hit the target. Many of the Croats, blinded by chauvinism, followed his instructions literally and enlisted in the service of the enemy. Lorkovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the puppet state made this declaration in February, 1942: "It was, above all, the contribution of the Croatian people and their revolution which shortened the duration of the war in Yugoslavia, reducing the total sum of German and Italian losses, and making possible the break-through on the eastern frontier of Serbia for the fatal blow to Yugoslavia." [5]

While the loyal troops were putting up a desperate resistance in spite of the crushing superiority of the enemy, the municipal militia and the peasant militia, instruments of the Croatian Peasant party, joined the Ustashi for the attack on the isolated units, after which they disarmed the Serbian officers and soldiers and handed them over to the Germans.

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[3] *Hrvatski Narod,* April 10, 1941.
[4] *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York, 1959), p. 772.
[5] W. D. Isla, *Commentaires sur les problemes yougoslaves* (Geneve, 1944), p. 45.

The capitulation of April 18, 1941 was immediately followed by the slicing up of the Yugoslav state, and it would seem that the vanquishers took a special savagery in tearing apart what the Treaty of Versailles had united into a single nation. "Of all the countries occupied in this war Yugoslavia has been the most dismembered and has been divided into the greatest number of administrative units. This dismemberment of Yugoslavia serves not only the immediate political purposes of the occupant but also the purpose of disintegrating and dividing the political forces in the occupied areas so far as to make difficult in the future the unification of all the political elements within the framework of one state." [6]

Serbia, reduced almost to its pre-1912 boundaries, was governed by Germany, although in the latter part of 1941 a civil administration was established under General Milan Nedic. Among leading Serbs arrested during the first days of the occupation were the Serbian Orthodox patriarch, Dr. Gavrilo Dozic and Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic, both of whom had sought refuge in the monastery of Ostrog in Montenegro. They were taken to Dachau where they were interned until the end of the war. In November 1941, the Italians arrested the Serbian Orthodox bishop of Dalmatia, Dr. Irinej Djordjevic, who was also interned in a concentration camp until the end of the war.

Southern Serbia (Macedonia) was given to Bulgaria, and the Northern provinces (Vojvodina) were occupied partly by Hungary. Albania, a subprotectorate of Italy, was given Western Metohia and the Kosovo region, which is to say, the very heart of the Serbian states of the middle ages.

The provinces of Slavonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Srem, went to Croatia. The greater part of Dalmatia Pavelic gave to Italy.[7]

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[6] Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington, 1944), p. 241.

[7] After the census of the population in 1921, there was in each province belonging to satellite Croatia:

	Catholics	*Serbian Orthodox*	*Moslems*
Croatia-Slavonia	1,992,519	658,076	2,539
Dalmatia	513,268	106,132	479
Bosnia-Herzegovina	444,309	829,360	588,173
	2,950,096	1,593,568	591,190

In 1941, there were about 2,200,000 Serbian Orthodox in satellite Croatia. The German general Guderian, in his memoirs, concludes that the civil war in Croatia was also largely caused by this annexation of territories which did not correspond to the ethnical frontier of the Croatian people.

We shall see, further on, how in revenge, Ante Pavelic, who had become the leader of the "Independent State," hastened, by a rectification of the boundaries, to give to Italy a territory twice the size of that which had been promised by the Secret Treaty of London (1915). (The earlier grant of the Duce to the Ustashi was far from being lost capital). In addition, Montenegro, which had also been declared an "independent" state, was ruled by an Italian governor, once Prince Mihailo Petrovic-Njegos had refused the crown.

Germany occupied lower Styria, Carinthia and Carniola, and immediately started germanizing these provinces. German became the only recognized official language. All the sign-posts and door signs were consequently changed, and even Slovene Christian names and surnames were changed. German teachers and administrators replaced the natives and introduced the doctrine of national socialism. Furthermore, in order to facilitate germanization, part of the population was deported to Serbia and Croatia to make room for the German columns. Therefore, in just that one year of 1941, 30,000 Slovenes were deported to Serbia.

In their haste to wipe out all trace of national culture, the occupying forces ordered the destruction of Slovene books, including even the prayer book.[8]

Such brutal methods could not help provoking strong popular resistance. Therefore, in that part of Slovenia which had become German, just as in the Italian zone, baptized "Province of Ljubljana," foreign occupation went to all sorts of extremes—pillage, rape, and burning of villages during "punishment" raids. The prisons were filled, and guerrilla warfare surged throughout the territory.

So while the Croats celebrated their illusory "Independence," and while the Germans settled in Serbia under the guise of a civil government, resistance organizations were forming in Yugoslavia. The Serbs, during their entire history, have never accepted defeat, and realizing the intentions of the Ustashi government to exterminate their own people in Croatia, their courage and resolution was redoubled.

Colonel Draza Mihailovic reached Ravna Gora on the 11th of May, 1941, where he called for resistance against the invader.

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[8] See Boris Furlan, *Fighting Yugoslavia* (New York: Yugoslav Information Center, 1943), pp. 4, 19, 20, 21.

The Yugoslav units which had escaped the enemy rallied to his call. These were the first effectives of an army (which could scarcely be called secret) whose soldiers were known as Chetniks, although they were the regular troops that had gone underground. This kind of war was an old tradition of the Serbs, who had practiced it for five centuries as Hayduks (outlaws) during the Turkish domination.

The ranks of the Chetniks, and soon after, the ranks of the Communist-led Partisans (chiefly Serbs from satellite Croatia who were fleeing from Ustashi terrorism) continued to grow, with the result that large areas of Yugoslav territory were liberated.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE CROATIAN USTASHI

Needless to say, the Catholic Church of Croatia did not remain inactive during the tragic days when events were marked by bloodshed. Great numbers of priests and their congregations inaugurated the collaboration, or, as one might say, the complicity that bound them for the next four years to the Ustashi. Among "these early workers" there were those who had been, for sometime, affiliated with the terrorist organization of Pavelic.

The official Croatian Catholic press welcomed the new regime: *Nedelja* (Zagreb) April 27, 1941 wrote: "God, who directs the destiny of nations and controls the hearts of Kings, has given us Ante Pavelic and moved the leader of friendly and allied people, Adolf Hitler, to use his victorious troops to disperse our oppressors and enable us to create an Independent State of Croatia. Glory be to God, our gratitude to Adolf Hitler, and infinite loyalty to our Poglavnik, Ante Pavelic."

And the *Kat. Tjednik* (8-31, 41) organ of the Sarajevo archbishopric, echoed similar sentiments: "Until now, God spoke through papal encycliclas. And? They closed their ears . . . Now God has decided to use other methods. He will prepare missions. European missions. World missions. They will be upheld, not by priests, but by army commanders. The sermons will be heard, with the help of cannons, machine guns, tanks, and bombers."

The newspaper, *Hrvatski Narod* (August 26, 1941), wrote the following regarding the role of the Croat Catholic clergy: "Franciscans not only spread the Ustashi idea outside the church in various villages, but enabled Croat fighters to meet with

Ustashi leaders in the Monastery of Cuntic during the most difficult period of struggle. They met secretly, under the leadership of their Commander, Slavko Kvaternik, with Minister D. Mirko Puk and other Ustashi from Zagreb."

Novi List (June 16, 1941) gave the following details regarding the role of the Croat clergy in their disloyal activities: "Things that you probably did not realize were then taking place. Ustashi disguised as monks came to villages, carrying all sorts of things under their robes, and prepared the people. They incited Ustashi hatred throughout Croatia in such a manner that when our friends the Germans and Italians came, they found us ready."

The idea of "The Sworn Ustashi" came out of the Catholic churches in Croatia. These sworn Ustashi were divided into two categories. Although they were adherents of a single idea, sworn to either before or after, they nevertheless differed according to whether they were sworn in illegally at Catholic churches before April 10, 1941, or publicly before improvised altars in numerous towns in the presence of the Ustashi emblem of knife, gun and bomb. The title of "The Sworn Ustashi" was bestowed upon those who had been sworn in illegally in prewar Yugoslavia and who had pledged to overthrow Yugoslavia and to assist in the extermination of Serbiandom and Orthodoxy. The newspaper, *Nova Hrvatska,* wrote the following regarding one such "Sworn Ustashi" on May 4, 1941: "The Mass was conducted in the municipal church of the holy Nicola Tavelic in Kustosija, by Rev. Cecelja, a Sworn Ustashi."

The Ustashi emigration established connections with the country through the clergy: "The movement looked for and found adherents among all classes of people, even among the clergy" (*Independent State of Croatia,* No. 33, p. 42, Year 1, Zagreb, 1941).

The Christmas issue of the newspaper, *Independent State of Croatia,* under the heading "The role of the Clergy in the Organization of the Independent State of Croatia," wrote the following: "The Franciscan High Schools in Sinj, Siroki Brijeg, Visoko; the Seminaries in Makarska, Mostar and Split; as well as the Theological Faculty of the Zagreb University were the true focal centers of national consciousness, and breeding grounds from which every year not only groups of levites and workers flocked out into the garden of God, but national fighters, who were to spread the national and Ustashi convictions, as well." (No. 33, p. 42, Year I, Zagreb, 1941).

During an Ustashi meeting held in Nova Gradiska, on June 2, 1941, Milovan Zanic, one of the prominent collaborators of Ante Pavelic, said the following: "The numerous little churches in this district, too, were witness and could testify to the pledging of Ustashi at the light of little church candles." [9]

The unity of the prewar Ustashi and the clergy is illustrated by the following article which appeared in the *Novi List* (September 20, 1941): "Already in the Summer and Fall of 1940, Dr. Victor Gutic, travelled throughout these regions, and, going from place to place, appointed and swore in Ustashi trustees everywhere, giving them various ranks of 'Tabornik,' 'Rojnik' and 'Ustasha.' He toured all the monasteries and municipalities, swearing in monks, vicars and priests to loyalty to the Leader of the Independent State of Croatia."

The best known of those who organized the Ustashi Militia and led attacks against the troops that remained loyal were the Franciscans:

> Alojzije Cosic from Kotor Varos, Miroslav Petrivac from Prozor, Karlo Grbovac from Duvno, Stjepan Naletelic, Vidak Coric from Brod, Mladen Barbaric from Mostar, Nikola Ivankovic from Nevesinje, Mirko Rafos from Bile, Mladen Lutic from Monastery Scita, Marijan Buric, parish priest from Scita, Julijo Kozul from Mostar, Andrija Jelcic Capljina, Berto Dragicevic, Vlado Bilobrk, parish priest from Metkovic, Ivan Hrstic, parish priest from Sinj, M. Juric, parish priest from Plivnice, Pio Karadzole, S. Kukolj, Josip Mikulic, Ivan Nikolic, Bonifacije Petrovic from Crkveni Bok, Vilim Primorac, Brno Raspudic, Rafael Romac from Metkovic, Skoko, parish priest from Capljina, Marko Zovko, parish priest from Stolac, Bono Rendulic, Ambroz Matonicki, Pavao Simovic, Pavao Silov. Then Ilija Majic from Duvno, Petar Grgic, parish priest from G. Tramoshnjica, Nikola Bosnjak, Ante Buconic, Bosiljko Vukojevic, parish priest from Medjugorje, Niko Daresic, parish priest from Trsten, Ante Mikulic, parish priest Prosolac, Josip Galestic, priest, Vilim Cecelja, parish priest from Kustosija, Oton Knezovic, Dionisije Lasic, Grujo Balokovic, Stjepan Bogutovac, Anton Weiss, Ivo Guberina, Josip Bujanovic, Mijo Jagodar, Franjo Matzenauer, Zvonko Lipovac, Vjekoslav Simic, Ivan Prlic, and many others.[10]

Or the parish priest Ivan Miletic who upon his death rightly deserved the high praise bestowed on him by his colleague Eugen Beluhan at the funeral service: "As a priest he fought against the Yugoslav army." [11]

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[9] *Hrvatski Narod*, June 3, 1941.
[10] Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen*, See index.
[11] *Hrvatski Narod*, July 25, 1944.

The Ustashi paper, *Hrvatski Narod,* of July 4, 1941, hailed the Franciscan priest, Dr. Radoslav Glavas, as a great organizer of the Ustashi. The article said, in part: "A young and energetic Franciscan, Dr. Radoslav Glavas, came to Siroki Brijeg and placed himself at the head of the struggle. A plan was even drawn to prevent the mobilization of the Yugoslav army. Thus the historic day of April 10th was welcomed, and in the night between April 10th and 11th, the Ustashi disarmed the local gendarmerie and captured the post-office." [12]

The same *Hrvatski Narod* of July 25, 1941, in the necrology about priest Don Ilija Tomas, said in part:

> He accepted with joy in his heart the Ustashi ideas, and as far back as 1937 we see him as a sworn Ustashi in the din of work, exertion and struggle.
>
> The war started, but the Croatians did not want to wage war against their old allies, the Germans; they are throwing down arms. Don Illija collects them. He works together with his neighbor from the other side of the Neretva, the priest Don Juro Vrdoljak-Biscevic, and the two of them, like two giants, rise to their people against the Serbian plundering bands. It seems that it is not known that as early as April 8, 1941, they proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia!
>
> Transport is interrupted, because the transport center, Capljinac, is held by two Ustashi, two Catholic priests, Don Illija Tomas, priest in Klepci, and Don Juraj Vrdoljak-Biscevic, priest in Studenac. They disarmed whatever army units tried to escape through Capljinac. They even captured a cannon, while Croatian soldiers came voluntarily to serve as reinforcements. Thus, two of them were cut off from the world and surrounded by the Serbian army, but held on amid increasing dangers and battles until April 20th, when the Germans came to their assistance. Shortly after that, Don Ilija was appointed Ustashi commissioner for the entire region.[13]

Immediately after his proclamation of the "Independent State of Croatia," on April 10, 1941, Kvaternik received His Grace Alois Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb, who came to welcome him in the name of the Church and to offer his congratulations, and at the same time to express his sympathy for the death of his brother, Peter Kvaternik, killed at Crikenica during an engagement against units of the Yugoslav army.

Furthermore, His Grace Stepinac duly conducted the funeral services of this hero, of whom the *Katolicki List* (No. 16—1941) wrote: "He fell just as he was about to achieve the loftiest task of his whole life."

[12] *Hrvatski Narod,* July 4, 1941.
[13] *Hrvatski Narod,* July 25, 1944.

Quite aware of the Archbishop's mission to Colonel Kvaternik, the newspapers of the new government could justifiably print: "This move established a close collaboration between the Ustashi and the supreme representative of the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Croatia." [14] But shortly beforehand, at the time of the Anschluss, another "supreme" representative of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Innitzer, primate of Austria, had also hastened, with his clergy, to be at Hitler's disposal.

Exactly as in days gone by at Vienna, the following day (April 11, 1941), Radio-Zagreb asked the population to give the German troops a warm welcome and to receive from the *Catholic parish offices the necessary directives for the future.*

But Ante Pavelic, the Head Chief, or *Poglavnik,* was still missing. He made his "entree" into Zagreb on April 13, sporting a fascist black shirt, with a bodyguard of Italian tanks. "His Croatian dream materialized.... The inexhaustible orator, finally reaching his goal, became a master of conciseness. . . . 'Blood will be shed and heads will fall.' " [15] And this was to be the dominant theme in his policy for a country established by order of Germany army headquarters (A.B.T. No. 0630/41, April 12, 1941), signed by Marshal Keitel "by order of the Fuhrer." [16]

The day after the arrival of Pavelic, His Grace Stepinac rushed to offer the congratulations of the Church to this assassin of King Alexander and Louis Barthou, who had been twice condemned to death in absentia, in Yugoslavia and in Aix-en-Provence. This great man had come, the prelate explained, "to realize the greatest task of his existence." [17] That same evening, during the banquet at the Archbishopric, black shirts and ecclesiastical robes fraternally mingled. They, each in turn, gave toasts brimming with cordiality, and during the dessert, flash bulbs photographed the edifying picture of His Grace reigning among the terrorists, which should be of interest to the historians of the future.

On Easter Day, 1941, Archbishop Stepinac announced from the pulpit in the Cathedral of Zagreb, the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia. Thus in the church itself, he celebrated high treason against Yugoslavia. The Archbishop

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[14] *Katolicki List* (Zagreb), No. 16, 1941.
[15] Jean-Marc Sabathier, *Paris-Match,* May 25, 1957, p. 21.
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] Refer to Croatian newspapers of this period especially *Nedjelja* (Sunday) organ of Crusaders (Zagreb), April 27, 1941 concerning the meetings of His Grace Stepinac with Slavko Kvaternik and Ante Pavelic.

ended his sermon with these words: "Jesus our resurrected Saviour! . . . I pray thee tell the Croatian people who are now facing a new era of life, what you told the Apostles after the Resurrection: Peace be with you!"

The foregoing quotation is from the official organ of the Archbishopric of Zagreb, *Katolicki List,* No. 16, 1941. In the same issue of this newspaper is a detailed review of the events that transpired from April 10th up to the first speech delivered by Ante Pavelic on April 15, 1941. The official journal of the Archbishop of Zagreb reported in detail the rapid events leading to the collapse of Yugoslavia, the role of the Ustashi and their supporters.

In Archbishop Stepinac's Diary (book 4, April 27, 1941) appears a notice written by Cvetan, the master of ceremonies at the Archbishopric, stating that Stepinac had done everything possible so that the Vatican would grant diplomatic recognition to Pavelic's Croatia. The words read:

> The auditor of the nunciature came from Belgrade to Zagreb on his way to Rome. He profited, while passing through, of a visit to the Archbishop, who informed him of the situation and begged him, since communication by mail had become so difficult, to ask for an audience with the Pope and explain the situation verbally. The Archbishop warmly recommended the establishment of relations, or in other words, recognition of the Croatian State by the Holy See, as soon as possible.[18]

Two weeks later came the reply of Pope Pius XII. The Diary of the Archbishopric noted (Book 5, p. 216): "The auditor of the nunciature of Belgrade returned from Rome and called on the Archbishop to tell him about his audience with the Pope. He stated that the Holy Father had listened attentively and suggested that the Archbishop send a written report as soon as possible. On his occasion the Holy Father declared that the initiative for establishing diplomatic relations should come from the government and that the Holy See had not received any word until then." [19]

Finally, there came great contributions of Mussolini and

[18] *Tajni dokumenti o odnosima Vatikana i Nezavisne drzave Hrvatske* (Secret documents of the relationship between the Vatican and the Independent State of Croatia), Zagreb, 1952, pp. 31-32.

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 32. It should be noted that during this exchange of suggestions between the Archbishop of Zagreb and Pope Pius XII through a spokesman of the nunciature, diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Vatican still existed and that a Royal Legation was actively functioning at the Holy See.

Hitler. Pavelic's, Hitler's and Mussolini's telegrams and the names of the members of the first Ustashi government were published. There was also a leading article entitled "The Independent State of Croatia." This article could not have been published without the authorization of Archbishop Stepinac. The article concludes that the Independent State of Croatia was created by All-Powerful Providence in the year of their national jubilee. The Catholic Church prays the Lord to enable the Croatian people to find in it the fulfillment of their justified aspirations, "convinced that all conditions are present for the fulfillment of the word of God: Blessed are the people whose Master is God. With desires and prayers we inaugurate the Independent State of Croatia."

Encouraged by such a suggestion, Pavelic requested the Pope to recognize his State. In his letter are the following lines:

> Holy Father! Divine Providence, having allowed me to take the government of my people and my country in hand, I firmly decide and wholeheartedly desire that the Croatian people, loyal to their glorious tradition remain, in the future, attached to the apostle Saint Peter and his successors, and that our country, imbued with the law of the gospel, becomes the Kingdom of Christ. In this great enterprise I beg for the help of your Holiness. I consider that such help would mean recognition by the apostolic supreme authority of Your Holiness, of our State, and kindly send me your representative that he may help me with his paternal advice. I pray that you may grant me and my people thy apostolic blessing. In kneeling at the feet of Thy Holiness as the most obedient son of Thy Holiness I kiss thy sacred right hand.[20]

After such a beginning, it is not surprising that the declarations of His Grace Stepinac, in the days that followed, seemed overflowing with blissful holiness and fervent ardor for the new regime. As he wrote in a pastoral letter on April 28th:

> Who could ever reproach us, for, as spiritual guardians we have contributed to popular enthusiasm and joy, by offering up prayers of profound gratitude to the divine majesty?
>
> A Domino factum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris (This is God's work and our eyes are filled with wonder Psalm 117, verse 33). I beg of you and pray you to make every effort so that our Croatia becomes God's own country, for it is only in this way that the essential duties of the State for the good of the people can be accomplished. . . .
>
> This is the reason why you should respond to our appeal, that you may consecrate yourselves to the safeguard and development of the

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

> Independent State of Croatia. Knowing the men who today hold the fate of the Croatian people in their hands, we are absolutely convinced that our effort is understood and wholeheartedly supported.
>
> I appeal to you, my venerated brothers of the priesthood! Never cease to call the believers in God to prayers! And you, who stand at the altar of God, raise your arms to the "Father of the starry heavens," for He is the source of every perfect gift, and pray to him to inspire the leader of our Independent State of Croatia that he may have the wisdom which will allow him to accomplish his Duty in honor of God, and for the salvation of the people, in justice and in truth.
>
> I therefore order the Te Deum to be sung in all the Churches next Sunday on the 4th of May, and I invite all the local authorities and our loyal people to attend.[21]

Doubtless the venerated priests obeyed these touching adjurations, for the reactions were soon obvious. The "men" whom His Grace Stepinac flattered himself in knowing seemed to have "understood" his "effort" quite clearly. It was not in vain that he asked for their "help"; they had already been accomplishing their "duty" which had been mapped out for them "in all justice and truth." They were certain of being even more successful later on, after their visit to the Holy Father, but the first signs of their activity were not negligible.

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[21] *Katolicki List*, No. 17, 1941, pp. 197-198.

Chapter IV

The Massacres Begin

ONE NIGHT, at the end of April, a few hundred Ustashi encircled the Serbian villages of Gudovac, Tuko, Bresovac and Bolac, in the district of Bjelovar. The Serbian Orthodox priest, Bozin, the school teacher, Stevan Ivankovic, and 250 peasants, both men and women, were forced by them to dig a long trench in a field, and then, with their hands tied behind their backs, they were buried alive in this tomb. This sadistic cruelty even made the Germans indignant. They disinterred the bodies and these documents were filed in their archives under the heading: "Ustachen Werk bei Bjelovar" (What the Ustashi did at Bjelovar).

At Sisak, the chief of police, Roko Faget, with his henchmen, flayed alive a Serbian industrialist, Milos Teslic, well known for his philanthropic work.

In the village of Otecac, 331 Serbs were massacred by the orders of Ivan Sajfer, an Ustashi officer, and the Serbian Orthodox priest, Branko Dobrosavljevic, was forced to pray before the tortured and dying, while his young son lay literally cut to pieces before his eyes. Then the executioners attacked the father, pulling out his hair and beard, putting his eyes out and torturing him at length, before he drew his last breath. At Svinjica, in the province of Banija, the same thing happened. An Orthodox priest, Dane Babic, was buried half alive, with his tormentors dancing around him, cannibal fashion, each in turn cutting off a strip of flesh as he passed.

Approximately, 60 Orthodox Serbs from Drvar and Bosanski Petrovac were imprisoned and then led to the forest of Risovac. They were killed with knives and thrown into deep crevices. Many were tortured and the Ustashi put salt on their open wounds. The first to be martyred was the Serbian Orthodox priest, Milan Banjac, and then Bogdan Bobo-Kreco. The latter was ordered by the Ustashi to cry: Long live Pavelic! but he insisted on crying: "Long live King Peter! Long live Serbia!", and then he was savagely slashed to pieces.[1]

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[1] The information in the next several paragraphs was published by Mile Vujinovic, in a series of articles in *The American Srbobran,* August 1951.

On April 30, 1941, the Ustashi captured Lipovo Polje near Kosinj. They took away two young girls, Milica Pocuca and Marija Stakic and cut their throats.

Right in Kosinj, the Ustashi assembled about 600 Serbs—men, women and children—and turned the place into a slaughter house. A mother was forced to hold the basin to catch the blood of her four sons.

Ljubica Radinovic was hung at the window of her house and in another window her husband, Mile, and their son.

This slaughter was organized by Joso Fadljevic and his accomplices, Ivan Plesa from Gornji Kosinj, Joso Plesa and Ante Bencic, also from Gornji Kosinj.

At Bosanski-Novi, other terrible massacres took place. Among the noted martyrs were Djordje Todic and Jovo Milanovic. Both had their noses and ears cut off, and their eyes put out. The villages of this district; Jablanica, Blagaj, Hrtic, Javoranj, Vanic, Djare, Bobera, Vrpolje, and others besides, were decimated.

If these first exploits did not affect the high esteem which His Grace Stepinac had for them, they at least made such an impression on the former president of the Yugoslav Senate, Dr. Zelimir Mazuranic, that he committed suicide in Zagreb, hoping that such a sign of protest would, in some way, efface the shame that such crimes reflected on the Croat nation.

THE CROATIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE MASSACRES

The first Ustashi government was constituted April 16, 1941, and was composed of the following:

President of the government and Minister of Foreign Affairs: Ante Pavelic
Vice-president: Osman Kulenovic from Bihac
Army: Slavko Kvaternik from Zagreb
Justice: Mirko Puk from Glina
Interior: Andrija Artukovic from Ljubuski
Public Health: Ivan Petric from Solta
National Economy: Lovro Susic from Mrkopolje
Cults and Public Education: Mile Budak from Sveti Rok
Forests and Mines: Ivica Frkovic from Licki Novi
Propaganda: Jozo Dumandzic from Ljubuski
President of the Legislative Council: Milovan Zanic from Senj.

On April 15th, the Independent State of Croatia was recognized by Germany and Italy, on the 16th by Hungary and Slovakia; on

the 22nd by Bulgaria; on May 7th by Roumania; and on June 7th by Japan. The Pavelic government immediately declared war against Great Britain, the USSR, Free France, and later the U.S.A.

A dictatorship similar to the fascist model was established, which ordered the dissolution of all political parties. Liberals, socialists and communists were imprisoned or sent to concentration camps. The trade unions were also dissolved and liberty of speech and the press forbidden. Only the Ustashi and Catholic press remained, while Catholicism became the official religion of the state.

The Ustashi, on coming into power, as has been observed, had, by a few inhuman acts, given some idea of the bloody regime which was in store for the country during the next four years. Eugen Kvaternik-Dido, son of Marshal Slavko Kvaternik, and one of the organizers of Alexander's assassination at Marseilles, was named Chief of Police at Zagreb. Soon he was to surpass in brutality the celebrated Yagoda, who had left such a sinister memory and who had directed the G.P.U. in the USSR during Stalin's reign of terror. Moreover, the horror of Eugen-Dido Kvaternik's crimes was more than his mother could bear and preferring to end her life committed suicide.

The Minister of the Interior, Andrija Artukovic, another notable terrorist, known as the Croatian Himmler and now living in the United States, ordered the Serbs and Jews of Zagreb to leave their homes within forty-eight hours. Once outside the town they were "liquidated" on the spot, or sent to concentration camps. The establishment of these camps had been one of the first secret measures of the new regime. It was only much later that their existence became officially recognized. Naturally, these arrests and assassinations were accompanied by spoliations and pillages, as house to house visits were made throughout the country. The Ustashi and SS agents, under the pretext of hunting down free masons, communists and Serbs, went into the homes of wealthy and well-to-do Jews and carried away all objects of value.

On April 19th the first decrees of racist inspiration, copied after the Hitlerian originals, and which quickly multiplied, were promulgated. One of these decrees concerned the nomination of commissaries in private enterprises owned by Serbs and Jews. Needless to say, these commissaries, once appointed, had the right to dispose of the goods entrusted to them as they saw fit.

On April 20th, there was the "Decree forbidding alienation of any means of motorized transportation," which marked the beginning of the confiscation of all vehicles belonging to Serbs and Jews.

On April 25th, the decree-law, No. XXV-33Z, proscribed the use of Cyrillic (Serbian) letters in public and private life. There was even a ridiculous and macabre detail concerning the funeral notices in Serbian letters which had to disappear within a period of three days.[2]

New measures were taken with accelerated speed by this superlatively pure Ustashi government to avoid further pollution of the race. The Serbs were forced to wear a blue armband with the letter P, the initial for Orthodox (Pravoslavac). The Jews had to wear the Star of David on their sleeves, and later, across their backs. Neither one nor the other, including the Gypsies, were allowed to circulate on the sidewalks. In the local administration offices, in public places, stores, restaurants, buses and street cars there were posters put everywhere with the inscription: "No Serbs, Jews, Nomads and dogs allowed."

Furthermore, a decree was issued on April 30, 1941 (No. XLV-67-Z-p. 1941) concerning "The protection of Aryan blood and the honor of the Croatian people." Another one on the same day (No. XLV-68-Z.p.1941) on "Belonging to the same race," worded in the purest Nazi style and leaving not the slightest doubt to the public as to the rights of the "elite" and the duties of the "inferior races," nor on the genealogical precisions that must be shown before being classified in the right category. Mixed marriages were forbidden, as well as the employment of aryan servants in non-aryan homes (No. 103-Z-p.1941). These were only repetitions of the vexatious treatment of the "inferior" based on the social-philosophical theories of Rosenberg, the well-known "thinker" of the Hitlerian regime in Germany.

A little later, on June 4th, 1941, a new decree (No. 342-Z-p. 1941) forced all the functionaries of the state, employers of private enterprises and members of liberal professions to make a declaration concerning their racial origin and that of their mates.[3]

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[2] *Narodne Novine* (Official Gazette), Zagreb, April 25, 1941.

[3] Texts of these laws may be found in *Narodne Novine* (Zagreb), April 30, May 6, and June 5, 1941.

Professor Stavrianos has written:

> The worst situation prevailed in Croatia, where the slogan of the Pavelich regime was "Za dom spremni" or "Ready for the Fatherland." By this was meant that there was no room for Serbians in the new Croatian state. The Ustashi accordingly set out to exterminate one portion of the Serbian population and to force the remainder to become Croatians. There followed a series of St. Bartholomew's nights against Orthodox Serbians and also against the Jews. Some members of the Croatian Catholic hierarchy endorsed the butchery and participated in the forcible conversion of Serbians to Catholicism. The Moslems joined in the massacres, so that Yugoslavia was rent by a virtual religious war with Catholics and Moslems allied against the Orthodox and the Jews. In 1942 Pavelich boasted that "Great deeds were done by Germans and Croats together. We can proudly say that we succeeded in breaking the Serb nation, which, after the English, is the most thick-headed, the most stubborn and the most stupid." The Serbians, needless to say, retaliated wherever they could, and they exacted bloody vengeance, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the neighboring Sanjak.[4]

Naturally, there were many enlightened and liberal citizens who knew very well who Pavelic and his followers were, but there were not many who raised their voices against the criminal deeds of Pavelic and his gang. Unfortunately, important segments of the Croatian Peasant party and the Catholic Church were in full collaboration with the Ustashi.

The Croatian masses let themselves be drawn into the collective movement that had been so carefully organized, being urged to acclaim the alleged liberation, while the supreme representative of the Catholic Church and the hierarchy, with its followers, praised the Poglavnik to the skies as if he were the Messiah.

CHURCHMEN GLORIFY NAZI-FASCISM

From the pulpits of the churches, and over the radio, the pastoral letter was read to the people in which His Grace Stepinac acknowledged the Ustashi government with enthusiasm, assuring it of his confidence and co-operation, and appealing to all of his loyal followers to collaborate with him. Besides the Te Deum sung on this occasion, masses were celebrated on the 10th of April every year, commemorating the founding of the national state. And the name day of St. Anthony was even given as a pretext for the Archbishop of Zagreb to organize

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 772.

political manifestations in honor of Pavelic, whose name was that of the patron saint.

The entire Catholic press hastened to keep in step with its pastor. Among these were: *Eparhijski List, Jeronimsko Svijetlo, Svetiste sv.Antuna, Krscanska Obitelj, Katolicki List, Gospa Sinjska, Za vjeru i Dom, Salezijanski Vjesnik, Djevojacki Svijet, Vjesnik pocasne straze Srca Isusova, Nedjelja, Nasa Gospa Lurdska, Katolicki Tjednik, Glasnik,* and others.

The Catholic press also made use of every possible opportunity to express its appreciation for the Ustashi movement. During the unveiling of a plaque on house No. 4 of the "*Captol,*" where the Ustashi met and organized their plots against the state of Yugoslavia, Archbishop Stepinac's newspaper, *Katolicki List* published an extensive article about this celebration, as well as the inscription on the plaque, which read: "The foundations of the Ustashi Movement were layed in this building, where the first Ustashi units were formed among adherents of the Croat Revolutionary Youth Organizations." [5]

The newspaper of the Sarajevo Archbishopric wrote the following concerning Ustashi Croatia: "We salute the new and free Croatia, as a Christian and Catholic State. Freedom is granted by God and therefore it is blessed by God." [6]

The same newspaper wrote in the following issue:

> Above our new, young and free Croatia the image of the Virgin Mother, this beautiful, shining image, has appeared in the heavens as a sign—signum in cielo—(oktr.12.1). The Lady comes to visit her Croatia, within her maternal mantle she wishes to enfold her young, reborn Croatia exactly in the thousandth year of the Catholic Jubilee. Again she descends on the flags of our freedom to occupy her ancient place; in order to protect us and to defend us as she did at the time when our Bans and Princes went into battle under the flag bearing her image. The Croatia of God and Mary of olden time is resurrected.[7]

The Catholic newspaper *Croatia Sacra,* wrote: "By the miraculous providence of God and after more than eight centuries, the State of Croatia is resurrected, free and independent, exactly in the year when the Catholic Croats are celebrating their Anniversary of 1300 years of their relationship with the Holy See." [8]

The *Katolicki List* made Satellite Croatia part of the "Celebra-

[5] *Katolicki List,* October, 1942, p. 479.
[6] *Katolicki Tjednik,* April 27, 1941 (Sarajevo).
[7] *Katolicki Tjednik,* May 11, 1941.
[8] *Croatia Sacra* (Zagreb, 1943), No. 20-21, p. 5.

tion of the Thousandth Year Jubilee." This was represented as follows: "The great Eucharistic Congress which was scheduled had to be postponed. However, in its place, by the favor of Providence, we have been bestowed with the resurrection of the Independent State of Croatia, the greatest gift a nation could receive."

Photographs of Pavelic covered the first page of newspapers and reviews, as well as the text of his speeches, with laudatory editorial articles, and even a poem which Archbishop Ivan Saric dedicated to the great man: "Kada Sunce sija" (When the Sun Shines).[9] And in *Glasnik Svetog Josipa* (May 1941) on one side of the half page Pavelic could be seen sitting in his office, while on the opposite side was St. Joseph holding the Christ Child. And all the "Big Bosses," Italian as well as German, were not overlooked. Each had his share of adulation. Their praises were sung in the name of morality and religion, and their totalitarian doctrines were lauded in defiance of such an anathema as western democracy. Hitler was considered "The Crusader of the Lord" by the clerical papers, and the priest, Felix Niedzielski, leader of the "Crusaders" (in Croatia), was chosen among all the incense-burners, as the one elected to praise his great Senior. He acquitted himself fluently and concluded: "Glory to our Lord! Gratitude to Hitler, and infinite honor and glory to our leader Ante Pavelic."[10]

The members of "Catholic Action" and its various affiliated organizations, such as the "Great Brotherhood of Crusaders," the academic society "Domagoj," the Catholic student association "Mahnic," the "Great Sisterhood of Crusaders," and many others, were, in most cases, well-known priests or secretly sworn members of the Ustashi. All these forces were mobilized for concerted action with the openly professed aim of spreading fascist ideology. This propaganda persuaded the faithful that it would be a good deed, in the highest interests of Croatia and the Catholic Church, to kill or convert the Serbs and to exterminate the Jews. How boldly this propaganda was published in the Catholic press will be shown.

The Crusaders had their own "athletic courses" for military drill.

The periodical *Krizar* (Crusader) of February, 1942, wrote

[9] *Vrhbosna* (Sarajevo), April-May, 1941.
[10] *Nedelja* (Zagreb), April 27, 1941.

that the Crusaders organizations served the Croatian youth from 1929 to 1934 as a place of refuge in the difficult struggle, and that a large number of young men learned for the first time in the dark Crusader halls about the Ustashi precursors, Starcevic and Kvaternik, about Ante Pavelic and the Lika uprising—an uprising against the Kingdom of Yugoslavia ten years before World War II led by Andrija Artukovic. Regular meetings were held in Pozega in 1940, before the attack on Yugoslavia, under the fictitious name of "Mary's Congregation," in the Crusaders' home.

The Catholic periodical *Nedelja* of April 27, 1941, carried an article entitled "The Crusaders Extend Greetings to the Croatian State And Its Poglavnik" (Fuehrer). This article reads, in part, as follows:

> The Great Brotherhood of Crusaders has sent through the Ustashi army chaplain, Dr. Ivo Guberina, and through Their Graces Cvitanovic and Vitezic, the following greetings to the Poglavnik:
>
> Our rejoicing and happiness is indescribable over the fact to greet in the name of the Great Brotherhood of Crusaders and of the entire Crusader organization our Poglavnik, the liberator of the Croatian people, the founder and chief of the Independent State of Croatia. Raised in the spirit of radical Catholicism, which knows no compromises so far as principles are concerned, they never knew what it meant to give in and abandon any part of the program of Croatian nationalism.
>
> Chieftain! The Crusaders greet you and express to you their great love and devotion.[11]

From the pulpit and in their own press, sections of both higher and lower Catholic clergy propagated Nazi-fascist ideas, under the cloak of religious and moral teachings. They sang the praises of Germany and Italy and simultaneously castigated the Western democratic powers. They told the faithful that Hitler was a crusader for the Lord and that Pavelic and the Ustashi had been sent by God to the Croatian people.

Furthermore, it was His Grace Stepinac who named the presidents and executive commissaries of these groups over which reigned a mystico-warlike atmosphere, which has perpetrated to the present time this medieval conception of "Fighting for Christ" with the sword and fire. With this as a starting point, the next step was either to "liquidate" or convert the Serbs, and

[11] *Nedelja,* April 27, 1941.

to exterminate the Jews, all in the higher interests of the Croatian fatherland and the Catholic Church. This anachronistic fanaticism did not seem to surprise the troops, for their "spiritual" leader was imbued with it, as the following phrase, extracted from his personal diary, testifies: "All in all, the Croatians and the Serbs are two worlds, the North and South poles, which can never come closer without a miracle from God. Schism is the greatest of evils in Europe, almost greater than Protestantism. In it there is no moral, no principle, no truth, no justice, and no honesty." [12]

EXTERMINATION OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CLERGY

Briefly speaking, this is, after all, but a paraphrase of the famous slogan of Starcevic, "God and the Croats." Beyond that, no salvation was possible. The only solution was to separate the grain from the darnel, without thinking too much about how it would be done.

Furthermore, in *Nedelja,* His Grace Stepinac, noting his first interview with the Poglavnik, relates how the latter confided in him his intention of exterminating the Old-Catholic sect and the Serbian Orthodox Church as well. And then His Grace continued, with the utmost simplicity: "During our whole conversation the Archbishop (meaning himself) had the impression that Pavelic was a sincere Catholic and that the Church would have complete freedom of action. . . ."

Certainly, it not only had complete freedom, but the Ustashi reciprocated by offering help that was as precious as the help which the Church had offered them. It could hardly have been otherwise, since "croatization" and "catholicization" had become one and the same thing, and since Croatia had replaced Austria-Hungary, in miniature, as the advance-guard bastion of the Roman Catholic Church in the Balkans.[13]

They were followed, on May 3rd, by measures which made them quite conclusive from a religious standpoint: e.g. The decree on conversion from one religion to another, by which preceding regulations on the subject were repealed. Mile Budak,

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[12] Extract from Stepinac's Diary (in own hand), p. 176, Book IV.

[13] With the consent of the Catholic hierarchy, the promulgation of racial decrees was begun on April 30, 1941.

Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, sent the text to the "ordinariats" of every diocese.[14]

Thenceforward, the Catholic Church cleared the way for the full development of proselytism in Croatia. The office of the ecclesiastical Court of the Archbishop of Zagreb settled on the principles which should be observed by the clergy as to the conversions. The procedures thus adopted were sent to the "Ordinariat," as was also the governmental decree which emphasized the enforcement. The text appeared in the newspaper *Katolicki List*, May 15, 1941.

It is not necessary to reproduce this long document "in extenso" but a résumé of the different articles is as follows:

1. Adhesion to the Roman Catholic Church can be granted to those who sincerely desire it and who are convinced of the truths of our Holy religion. "Faith is a question of free choice."
2. The new catechumens must have sufficient knowledge concerning the truths of the faith, and during their instruction they must attend services assiduously and indulge in prayer.
3. Persons who are not living according to the matrimonial regulations recognized by the Church cannot be accepted. (This rule was evidently aimed at the married priests of the Serbian Orthodox religion.)
4. Married people who wish to be converted must promise to be baptized and raise their future children in the Catholic Church, as well as convert those already born.
5. The clergy is instructed to submit the complete dossier to competent ecclesiastical authorities so that the requests may be examined without delay.

And finally article 6 was textually worded as follows: "The attention of the parish clergy is drawn to the necessity of treating these delicate problems concerning the human soul, strictly in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church while safeguarding its dignity and prestige and while refusing *a limine*

[14] Several major ones were as follows: Preservation of Aryan blood and honor to Croatian people, N° 44-67-Z, April 30, 1941; Racial affinity, N° 45468-Z, April 30, 1941; Nationalization of Jewish property and business enterprises, CL-348-Z, June 1941; Preservation of national and aryan culture of the Croatian people, N° CXLVII-333-Z, June 1941; Employment of female persons in non-aryan households, N° 103-Z, May 6, 1941; The changing of Jewish last names and identification of Jews and Jewish firms, N° 336-Z, June 4, 1941; Prevention of concealment of Jewish property, N° CLI-347-Z, June 5, 1941; Identification of racial origin and administrative officials of autonomous bodies and persons holding free academic titles, N° 342-Z, June 5, 1941; Confiscation of Jewish property and enterprises, N° CCCXXXVI-1699-Z, October 1941.

all persons who seek to belong to the church only for material interest or selfish motives.[15]

These instructions given to the priests were simply to remind them of the prescriptions of the canon law on these questions.

It can be seen, later on, how the Catholic Church "safeguarded its dignity and prestige" in practice, and how the massive conversions concerning "the delicate questions of the human soul" for which the Archbishop of Zagreb showed such respect, were undertaken by the method of "do or die."

The nearly simultaneous publication of the Ustashi government and the Catholic hierarchy, concerning the conversions, left no doubt as to the collusion in this matter between the temporal and spiritual powers.

With relation to the campaign against the Serbs and the Orthodox Church, a broadcast from the Croat Radio Station at Zagreb should be recalled: The transmission of July 29, 1941, among other things, said: "In the Independent State of Croatia there are no Serbs and no so-called Serbian Orthodox Church . . . There can be no Serbs or Orthodoxy in Croatia, the Croats will see to it that this is made true as soon as possible." [16]

Somewhat later a German newspaper wrote:

> An extraordinary ecclesiastical struggle is going on in Croatia. The Ustashi Government is persecuting the Orthodox Church and is trying to convert as many Orthodox people as possible to Catholicism by means of intimidation and all kinds of devices. At the opening of the so-called Croat Assembly, Pavelic said that religious freedom did exist in principle, but that it did not include the Orthodox Church. Apart from nationalistic reasons, Pavelic endeavored to represent himself as a missionary by virtue of his work on behalf of the church, thus desiring to acquire greater prestige. We still recall his visit to the Pope at the time when he was just organizing his "State." [17]

It seems hardly credible that these measures of segregation, so hastily adopted by the government, as well as the explosive articles published by the Ustashi press against the Jews, the Serbs, and the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the articles, quite as virulent, in the Catholic press, that the public did not become aware, from the very beginning, of the criminal intentions that were being cogitated by the masters of the hour. But such was the case! At first, these brutal measures were considered just

[15] *Katolicki List,* May 15, 1941.
[16] *Hrvatski Narod,* July 30, 1941.
[17] *Die Zeitung* (Berlin), April 2, 1944.

methods of intimidation, destined to discourage any attempt to oppose the "new order" which was being imposed upon the country. They were supposed to be motives for frightening the people and, above all, the minority groups which might cause trouble. Such were the illusions cherished by the future victims. The Serbian Orthodox population, moreover, considered the Independent State of interest exclusively to the Croats. In their estimation, it was only an ephemeral institution, a vicissitude which they would have to bear as patiently as possible, while awaiting the victory of the United Nations, in which it had never failed to believe, confident that it would mean the rescue of their liberty and their state.

They naïvely thought that all that was needed was to behave loyally toward the new leaders and play safe through such difficult times.

It was easy to see how deep-rooted their confidence really was by the haste with which the Serbs obeyed the government orders, for all civilians in possession of firearms handed them over to the authorities. War guns, machine guns, and rifles remaining in the hands of the soldiers after the defeat, which they had taken home, and even hunting rifles, were thus transferred to the Ustashi arsenal to be used, without delay, against those who had so innocently given them up.

For it was only shortly after this preliminary disarmament that the massacres started in certain Serbian areas. And then it was that the Serbian intellectuals and representatives of the Orthodox Church clearly realized the true intentions of the extremist government and the episcopacy. This was definitely no momentary crisis or just some chauvinistic religious explosion of words, but the realization of a well-calculated plan which had taken some time to ripen to perfection; the same kind of plan that Hungary and the Roman Curia had been unable to carry out during the middle ages, namely the biological extermination of the "schismatics," meaning all the Serbian Orthodox population settled in Croatia since the fifteenth century. The Jews also were destined for the same fate, which was called the "permanent solution," according to the racist plan of the Nazis.

The Ustashi government rapidly got organized for its great mission. Andrija Artukovic, Minister of the Interior, and the right hand man of Ante Pavelic, took charge of the "Ustashi Service of Control" (Ustaska Nadzorna Sluzba), imitated after the Gestapo and the fascist Ovra. The two decree-laws had, there-

fore, to be promulgated (those mentioned above), assuring the Minister of the Interior the control of twelve police corps and the constabulary, each having its own attributions (Ustashi police, Intelligence Service, Defense Police, Security Service, Office for Public Order and Security, County Police, Defense squads, Security Service of the Poglavnik (a body guard), Police Guard, Industrial Police, Gendarmery, and Military Police).

1. The decree on the establishment of the Office for Public Order and Security of the Independent State of Croatia No. 112. Pr. M.U.P. 1941, May 4, 1941 (Official Gazette, *Narodne Novine,* May 7, 1941), which reads as follows:

> Office for Public Order and Security of the Independent State of Croatia falls under the Ministry of the Interior as a special department, and is directly subordinated to the Minister of Interior.
>
> Office for Public Order and Security of the Independent State of Croatia has supreme control over the activities of police department in all branches and over the public employees.

2. The decision of the Minister of Interior of May 25, 1943, No. 310 V.M. 1943, on the internal organization and division of competences within the Ministry of Interior Affairs, No. 1659-D.V. 1943 (Official Gazette *Narodne Novine,* of July 16th, 1943). A paragraph of this decision reads as follows: "Affairs falling under the competence of the Minister of Interior are performed by: the Minister's Office, Supervisory Department, Head Office for Interior Administration, and Office for Public Order and Security."

Each one of these two regulations merely suffice to indicate clearly and unambiguously that the whole police service and authority were in the hands of the Minister of Interior.

These measures, in a detailed form, were completed by organizing special courts: *Prijeki Sud* (Extraordinary Court); *Pokretni Sud* (Mobile Court); *Izvanredni Narodni Sud* (Special People's Court), and *Veliki Izvanredni Narodni Sud* (Grand Extraordinary People's Court). Decrees No. LXXXII-148-Z of May 17th, 1941,[18] and No. CLXXII-508-P. of June 24th, 1941,[19] and CLXXXVI-643-Z-p. 1941.[20]

Thirty-four similar courts covered all of Croatia to enforce the reign of terror. The sentences pronounced were based on the

[18] *Narodne Novine,* May 20, 1941.
[19] *Narodne Novine,* June 24, 1941.
[20] *Narodne Novine,* July 10, 1941.

principles of collective responsibility. There was only one punishment—death. It is superfluous to add that any defense before the judges was impossible, for they had all taken an oath as Ustashi and were consequently under orders.

A new law was enacted concerning the war tribunals—No. CXCIV-1553-Z-1942.[21]

Thus all was ready for methodical action; the first being the destruction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Deprived of their leaders, the Serbian Orthodox were thought to be tractable to conversion or else easier to "liquidate."

On May 3, 1941, the Ustashi killed the brother of Milos Buncic from the village of Dodosi, who was mayor of Kraljevcane and Council Deputy, and tortured his wife and his father.

Buncic had fled, and the Ustashi were threatening to burn down his home and kill everyone in it if he did not report to the Ustashi command in 24 hours. In order not to expose his family to those tortures, Buncic reported to the Ustashi authorities, who tortured him for eight hours until he fell unconscious. Thinking that he was dead, the Ustashi threw him into a cellar where there were five bodies, among whom he recognized Adam Resanovic, a shoemaker from Glina, and Stojan Slepcevic, a farmer. The other three were disfigured to the extent that he could not recognize them. After regaining his senses, Buncic escaped through the cellar window, and the dead men were thrown into the Glincica River.

In Glina on May 8th, the Ustashi killed Ilija Letic, together with his two sons and two assistants, Damjan Metikos, a merchant from Glina, and Professor Mehandjija.

The arrests continued and in a short period of time 560 Serbs were killed in that region.

On May 11, a train stopped at Glina with 120 Serbs, who were taken to the courtyard of the Jewish merchant Cohen. There a part of them were killed and the rest were taken off to an unknown destination. Among those known to have been killed were Jovan Krajcinovic, a roadkeeper from Jabukovac, and Nikola Lelic a farmer from Dragotinci.

On May 4th, Bishop Platon, from Banja Luka, was ordered by the Ustashi Prefect, Viktor Gutic, to leave town immediately. Thereupon he implored his brother, the Catholic Bishop, Jozo Garic, in the name of Jesus Christ, to intercede so that he would

[21] *Narodne Novine*, July 6, 1942.

be granted two or three days' delay, so as to prepare his departure. His Grace, Garic, gave his promise and told him there was no need to hurry. But during the night, at three in the morning, six Ustashi, led by the executioner, Djelic, with the police agent, Tomic, and another functionary, called Krmpotic, arrested Bishop Platon. Accompanied by the Serbian Orthodox priest, Dusan Subotic, from Stara Gradiska, he was led six kilometers away to the village of Vrbanja. Judging by the appearance of their mutilated faces, the Bishop and the priest had been shaved with a blunt knife. Their eyes had been put out, and their noses and ears cut off, while a fire was lighted on their chests. Finally, when they had sufficiently suffered, they were given the *coup de grâce,* which ended their martyrdom. The bodies were found May 23rd, in the Vrbanja River.

A few days later, the Metropolitan, Peter Zimonjic, of Sarajevo, an octogenarian, was arrested (by order of the Minister of the Interior, Andrija Artukovic) by Bozidar Brale, who in his accumulation of functions, had become Prefect of Eastern Bosnia, curate of St. Joseph's Church at Sarajevo, and secretary to Archbishop Ivan Saric, the "poet." The old gentleman was ordered to forbid the use of cyrillic lettering in the Serbian Orthodox parishes, and when he refused, he was thrown in prison in Zagreb. Afterwards he was sent to a concentration camp at Jasenovac where he was rapidly "liquidated."

Bozidar Brale's zeal in extirpating the "schism" was stimulated by a new distinction which was added to his numerous positions. Through the influence of his Archbishop, a year after his nomination as Prefect, he became honorary president of the ecclesiastical Court of the Archbishopric, with the right to wear the purple sash. This dignitary of the Church later was responsible for the massacre of the Serbs at Reljevo and at Alipasin Most.

These executions of Serbian Orthodox priests, accompanied by horrible tortures, became even more frequent after Pavelic's trip to Rome.

A CROATIAN KING

The Poglavnik and his acolytes wanted to name a king as Head of their State, and it is curious to note that these ultranationalists wanted to offer the crown to Otto of Habsburg, a descendant of their old Austro-Hungarian masters. But Hitler could not bear the family, and Pavelic already had given other promises, so a member of the House of Savoy was decided upon.

A Croatian delegation, headed by Pavelic went to Rome on May 18, 1941, with this idea in view. His Grace, Salis-Sewis, the Vicar-General of the Archbishopric of Zagreb, was there as a representative of His Grace, Stepinac, as well as the curate of Ogulin, Ivan Mikan, the priest Vilim Cecelja, and the Fransican Radoslav Glavas, who will be mentioned later.

The Croats were received with great pomp at the Quirinal where the former lawyer of Zagreb made an eloquent discourse, in which he begged the emperor and the King, Victor-Emmanuel to "kindly designate one of the Princes of his House, as the one to wear the Crown of Zvonimir."

His Italo-Ethiopian Majesty acknowledged this request with ingratiating benevolence, and, in replying, said:

> Italy has now, in a tangible way, shown her deep understanding and her interest in the desires of the Croatian people in choosing you as her intrepid representative. Today the secular need of the Croatian people for the resurrection of its own State has been realized, thanks to the victory of the Axis powers. We are very happy to profit from this occasion, during such an impressive and fatuous manifestation, to assure the delegates of the Independent State of Croatia that Italy, as the unfailing and staunch friend of its distinguished neighbors, is ready to lend its fraternal co-operation in all future projects and activities. Inspired by such sentiments, we are happy to be able to accept the offer of the Croatian people and to allow our well-beloved nephew, His Royal Highness, the Duke of Spoleto, to set the crown of Croatia upon his head.[22]

It would not be superfluous to add, that on that same evening of May 17th, the Duke was received by Pope Pius XII.

In accepting the crown of Zvonimir, the new King took the name of Tomislav II. This was perhaps the only historical act of his reign, for the improvised monarch had the good taste never to set foot in a kingdom of bloodshed.

After having solicited Italian sovereignty for his country, the Poglavnik went with the delegates to the Pantheon where he laid a crown on the tombs of Victor Emmanuel II and Humbert of Savoy.

Then, on that same day at six in the evening, he was received by Pope Pius XII in a private audience. The delegation was admitted later on, at 7:30. A detachment of the Swiss pontifical guard rendered the honors, reserved for the Head of a State, to Pavelic. All in all, this was a tacit recognition of Satellite Croatia

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[22] *Hrvatski Narod,* May 19, 1941.

by the Vatican. It should not be forgotten that at this period there still existed a Yugoslav legation, with a charge d'affaires, at the Holy See.

This event was extensively publicized in the country by the official Croatian Catholic press: "The warm welcome extended to the Poglavnik and the delegation of the Croatian State, by the Holy Father Pius XII reveals that by receiving them so rapidly and with such whole-heartedness, the Church considers the representatives of our National State of International importance." [23]

And still again: "Those who are well acquainted with the traditions of the Vatican say that on Sunday, above all in the evening, the Holy Father was never known to have given an audience to any group, which explains why the courtesy extended by His Holiness Pope Pius XII was considered as such a special mark of attention in regard to the Croatian people." [24]

* * *

However, Pavelic's trip to Rome had quite a different objective than just an interview with the Pope and the illusory offer of the throne of Zvonimir. It could even be supposed that these two spectacular manifestations, which flattered Croatian self-respect, were organized for the purpose of swerving public attention from the question of expense. The sum was naturally quite appreciable and Mussolini, by sending for the Poglavnik and his good friends from Zagreb, had not done so gratuitously. They would have to pay the price for the honor of having him as their Head. Once the Ustashi were in power, the financial aid and the patronage which the Duce had granted them over a certain length of time constituted a substantial compensation. Needless to say, it had been settled upon a very long time in advance.

Therefore, Pavelic went through a very simple formality when he counter-signed, while waiting for Mussolini at the Venezia Palace, the Italo-Croatian Treaties.

The first of these dwelt on the boundary lines between these two countries. Italy was ceded the districts of Kastav, Susak, Cabar; the islands of the Adriatic, Saint Marc, Krk, Rab; and the Territory extending from Cape Privlaka to Novigrad and which followed the coast up to the Isle of Krk; with, in addition the islands of Ciove, Brvenik, Solta, Vis, Bisevo, Saint-Andrej, Jabuka, Korcula and Mljet, Boka Kotorska and their rocky areas.

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[23] *Hrvatski Narod,* May 20, 1941.
[24] *Katolicki List,* Nos. 21-22, 1941.

In the second treaty, the Ustashi government agreed not to build military bases on the remainder of the Adriatic coast and its islands, not to have a navy, and to allow Italian troops to pass freely throughout Croatian territory.

Finally, after a third diplomatic agreement, concluded for the duration of twenty-five years, Italy guaranteed to protect Croatian territory, while the government of the latter promised not to contract any engagement with anyone else unless it was for Italy's common interest. It also accepted the collaboration of the Italian army in organizing technical training for its own army.

In addition, a close agreement was anticipated concerning finance and communication.

After exchanging signatures, the Duce and Pavelic appeared on the balcony, acclaimed by enthusiastic crowds, especially by those who had been summoned for such occasions. A banquet then closed this ceremony which consecrated Italy's complete hold on the so-called Independent State of Croatia.

The dates of May 12th and 24th, 1941 should be mentioned, when the Yugoslav government in exile at London raised an official protest against the dismembering of Yugoslavia and the foundation of Satellite Croatia. On this occasion, Mr. Sumner Welles, then Under-Secretary of State in the U.S.A., stated that he wished "to reiterate the indignation of this government and the American people at the invasion and mutilation of Yugoslavia by various member states of the Tripartite Pact." [25]

HOLY SEE AND PAVELIC'S CROATIA

It was not without reason that the official Catholic press gave the public to understand that the Holy See had recognized the new Croatia *de facto*.

Another pontifical measure soon added significance to the event of Pavelic's ceremonious welcome at the Vatican, usually given only for the head of a government. The Pope on 13 June (Pavelic's name day, "Antunovo") designated His Grace, Giuseppe Ramiro Marcone, a Benedictine of the Monte Vergine congregation and a member of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, to represent him at the Croatian episcopacy. But in the matter of attributions His Grace, Marcone, singularly surpassed those of an "apostolic visitor," that being his official

[25] The Under Secretary of State to the Minister of Yugoslavia, May 28th, Department of State, vol. IV, n°102, June 7, 1941, p. 683.

title. So, according to the protocol of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Zagreb, he was classified, with his secretary, Masucci, another Benedictine, under the heading: "Delegation of the Holy See," and in official ceremonies he was placed ahead of the representatives of the Axis, being considered the Dean of the diplomatic corps. Furthermore, His Grace, Marcone, in his correspondence with the Ustashi government, called himself "Sancti Sedis Legatus" or "Elegatus," but never "apostolic visitor."

The Croat hierarchy, as well as the press, referred to Ramiro Marcone as the Pope's Legate, giving him the title of "His Excellency," and never specifically mentioned him as the Pope's observer or envoy to the Croat Catholic Episcopacy.

During the ordaining of the new Bishop, Janko Simrak in Krizevci, on August 18, 1942, "the Pope's legate to the Independent State of Croatia, Mgr. Ramiro Marcone was present with his secretary." [26]

In reporting on the Pontifical Requiem which was held in Zagreb after the death of Maglione, Secretary of the Vatican, on August 24, 1944, the *Katolicki List* wrote that Mgr. Ramiro Marcone, the delegate of the Holy See in the Independent State of Croatia,[27] was also present.

Another article published in the Christmas issue of the *Katolicki List* mentions again that "the Honorabe Fra. Ramiro Marcone, was the delegate of the Holy See in Zagreb." [28]

In an article on apologetics, which appeared in the *Katolicki List* in connection with the "celebration of the name's day of the honorable legate," it is clearly seen that Mgr. Ramiro Marcone was the "legate of the Holy See in the Independent State of Croatia." [29]

Katolicki List wrote how the clero-Ustashi group looked upon Fra. Marcone, and said the following in that regard: "This was more than was needed for establishing the recognition *de facto,* since as the name indicated, it was not conferred by international law, or by any explicit declaration, but was deducted from an ensemble of facts, which in themselves were amply significant. His Grace, Stepinac, understood this perfectly when he noted in his journal on August 3rd, the day the Pope's representative reached Zagreb: 'By this act, the Holy See has recognized *via facti* the Independent State of Croatia.' "

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[26] *Katolicki List,* August 27, 1942, p. 409.
[27] *Ibid.,* August 25, 1944, p. 426.
[28] *Ibid.,* August 25, 1944, p. 426.
[29] *Ibid.,* March 8, 1945, p. 79.

Katolicki List also wrote the following regarding Ramiro Marcone's position and mission: "We, the Croats, see in Fra. Marcone a high diplomatic representative of the Pope, our Holy Father. . . . May the Lord bless his sacrificing work, may it bear the richest fruits to the benefit of the Holy Church and the State of Croatia." [30]

It is natural that such a political introduction given to Fra. Marcone was bound to affect the Catholic masses in the Independent State of Croatia, as well as the Ustashi government. It must have reflected on the religious feelings and political orientation of the Catholic masses. By interpreting Fra. Marcone's role in such a manner, a conscious and intentional influence acted on the Catholic masses invoking in them the desire to preserve the Independent State of Croatia.

In exchange, Pavelic sent two unofficial representatives to the Vatican, Nikola Rusinovic, and then Erwin Lobkowicz, the Pope's secret chamberlain. Although they had no titles, they were diplomatic agents, and implicitly recognized as such, since His Grace Canali, the great manipulator of finances at St. Peter's, provided them with Vatican ration tickets, *carta annonaria,* to which all accredited diplomats of the Holy See were entitled.

It can thus be observed that there were close ties between the Vatican and Satellite Croatia, where Giuseppe Ramiro Marcone remained until the debacle, transmitting instructions from Rome to the Croatian clergy and episcopacy, principally concerning the conversions, and often traveling from one region to another, where the battle was raging between the resistants and the Ustashi. The "apostolic visitor" was on excellent terms with the latter, and also with the officers of the Axis, as can be proved by many photographs, showing him in their midst during the official ceremonies. He can be seen in the Poglavnik's intimate family circle, looking most paternal and benevolent.

The cordiality of these public as well as private relationships remained untouched by the assassination of the Serbian Orthodox priests, which continued to multiply.

On May 21st, the same day that the Croat delegation returned triumphant from Rome, the Bishop of Plaski, Sava Trlajic, was arrested by the Ustashi officer, Josip Tomljenovic, and his palace pillaged and demolished. He was taken in a truck to Ogulin with three other priests, Jasa Stepanov, Milan Rajcevic, and Bogoljub

[30] March 8, 1945, p. 79.

Gakovic, and also thirteen Serbian notables. All of them were shut up in a stable, beaten and tortured, and then taken away to Gospic. From there, about Aug. 15th, they were sent away by convoy, with two thousand Serbs, to the Island of Pag where a general "liquidation" took place.

Even in Zagreb, where His Grace Stepinac and the "visitor" Marcone resided, the Serbian Orthodox Bishop Dositej, was beaten and tortured to such an extent that he became insane.

There were four Serbian Orthodox Bishops with those from Bosnia-Herzegovina, to which should be added approximately 171 priests and religious followers, who, like the first Christians, met the fate of martyrs upon the ruins of their profaned churches. Others were deported to Serbia. Only those of the mountainous regions, controlled by the guerillas, were able to escape.

The Serbian population, thus bereft of the traditional leaders, became an easier prey for the converters, as well as for the assassins. Massive massacres took place after their death and torture in the bishoprics of the two martyrs, Trlajic and Dositej, which served as a prelude to equally massive conversions.

Parallel to the onslaughts made against the Serbs, was the extermination of the Jews, which continued with a vengeance, and applauded by the Catholic Croatian press. Just as the terrorism had nearly reached its climax, the *Katolicki Tjednik*, the organ of Catholic Action and specifically of Archbishop Saric of Sarajevo, published an article signed by the priest Franjo Kralik, entitled: "Why Are THE JEWS BEING PERSECUTED?" Among the items is the following text:

> The descendants of those who hated Jesus, who condemned him to death, who crucified him and immediately persecuted his disciples, are guilty of greater excesses than those of their forefathers. Greed is growing. The Jews who led Europe and the entire world to disaster —morally, culturally and economically—developed an appetite which nothing less than the world as a whole could satisfy. . . . Satan helped them to invent Socialism and Communism. Love has its limits. The movement for freeing the world from Jews is a movement for the renascence of human dignity. The all-wise and Almighty God is behind this movement.[31]

The "renaissance" of human dignity in Satellite Croatia reached its peak with the deliberate mass slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

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[31] *Katolicki Tjednik* (The Catholic Weekly), Sarajevo, May 25, 1941.

A little later the same paper gave further emphasis: "The greatest enemies of the Croatian people are the Serbs and, as in all Europe, the Jews, Free Masons, and Communists." [32]

This was, at least, what Roman clericalism had preached in all the countries of Europe, even before it had fallen beneath the yoke of Hitler. The following is an excerpt from the pastoral letter of the primate of Poland, Cardinal Hlond: "It is an actual fact that the Jews fight against the Catholic Church. They are free-thinkers, and constitute the vanguard of atheism, bolshevism and revolution. The Jewish influence on morals is fatal. It is also true that the Jews are committing frauds, practicing usury and dealing in white slavery." [33]

The Ustashi exterminated 80% of Yugoslav Jews.

These warm-hearted testimonials of approbation, cited by the Catholic-Croatian authorities who had adopted the policy of racial and religious purges practiced by the Ustashi, could be multiplied without end.

Still again the following quotation: "Blessings upon the first national Croatian banner in Bosnia took place in the convent of Nazareth before the Sisters of Christ's precious Blood . . . near Banja Luka. The standard-bearer was Viktor Gutic." [34]

It so happened that Viktor Gutic was none other than the Ustashi prefect who, a month before, had ordered the "liquidation" of Bishop Platon, of Banja Luka, with all the refinements of cruelty which have, heretofore, been described. Perhaps Christ's blood was cherished by the good sisters of Nazareth but the blood of Christians, such as the Serbian Orthodox was worth nothing to them.

NO MORE SERBS

Viktor Gutic is to be remembered for another reason. It was he who, as governor of western Bosnia (Veliki Zupan), first officially announced in public the intentions of the Ustashi government in regard to the Serbian minority of Satellite Croatia. On May 26th, he made a speech at Banja Luka in which he said: "All undesirable elements will be exterminated so that no trace will remain." And the following day, during a meeting at Sanski Most, he was still more explicit:

[32] *Katolicki Tjednik* (The Catholic Weekly), Sarajevo, June 15, 1941.
[33] *Time*, July 22, 1946.
[34] *Hrvatska Krajina* (Croatian Frontier), June 12, 1941.

> The Serbian army is finished. Serbia does not exist anymore! That Karadjordjevic Gypsy Dynasty has fallen, and will end for us soon. The highways will be waiting for the Serbs to pass, but the Serbs will be no more there! I have published drastic orders for their total economic destruction, and other orders will follow for their complete annihilation. Do not be weak toward anyone of them . . . destroy them wherever you get a chance, and the blessings of our Leader and mine will be upon you. . . . Anyone who protects them becomes by this very fact an enemy of the Croat freedom. . . . Let the Serbs do away with their hopes. . . . By these methods we shall be fulfilling the will of God and that of our Croatian people.[35]

That same day, at Prijedor, a town he was obliged to pass through on his way to Banja Luka, he became indignant on not seeing any Serb hanging on the gallows. At Sanski Most, from whence he had come, twenty-seven corpses had been hanging on the trees of the public square for two whole days. In order to spur on the indolent inhabitants, he again proclaimed his desire to wipe out the abhorrent race; part would be sent to the concentration camps, others would be thrown into the river "without boats," and the rest would serve as fertilizer "for our fields which will become forever Croat."

> In this district three churches were in the past taken away from the Croat people, one of which is located in Prnjavor. You should take them over tomorrow and write upon them "Hrvatski Dom" (Croat Center). Those who accepted the Orthodox religion should at once be converted back to Catholicism, otherwise I will be forced to pass special regulations regarding this matter. I am sending this message to the Serbian nest in Prnjavor: I will come and annihilate it myself in only 24 hours. I will do the killing and you will follow me.[36]

He had also declared during an official manifestation: "Either we shall conquer and the damned Serbs will be forever out of the way, or if, by some mishap, Yugoslavia were reintegrated, at least we shall have reduced the statistical numbers in favor of the Croats." [37]

On June 11, 1941, the Ustashi arrested all the Serbs in Bihac under the pretext that some kind of celebration would take place on the next day, and in order to preserve peace they had

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[35] Newspaper *Hrvatska Krajina* (Banja Luka), May 30, 1941. Gutic was captured by the British in Italy and was turned over to Tito. While in prison in Italy, waiting extradition, he went out of his mind, with symptoms of religious mania.

[36] Speech delivered by Dr. Viktor Gutic, Chief Official of Banja Luka, on June 9, 1941 in Prnajvor, before the District Municipal Building.

[37] These quotations are from the same article, "Triumph of Dr. Viktor Gutic on the way to Sanski Most," *Hrvatska Krajina*, May 30, 1941.

to be arrested. On June 17, about twenty of the most respected Serbs were driven through the city, from the prison to the Municipality, tied to one long chain. There they were interrogated by Eugen-Dido Kvaternik personally. That same evening, between 10 and 11 P.M., these men were taken by truck to an unknown destination. Some of the Ustashi said that they were taken to Zagreb, others said that they were taken to the Drnja Camp, near Koprivnica, and others said that they were massacred in the vicinity. The third supposition seemed to be right, because the truck on which they were taken returned to Bihac that same evening. The rest of the Serbs, who were held in the Bihac prison, were tortured and beaten atrociously by the Ustashi.

And so the massacres continued here and there in Bosnia-Herzegovina, during the month of May, as a prelude to the massive extermination prophesied by Gutic. At Korita, 176 Serbs were killed and thrown into a grotto called Koritska Jama.

Andrija Artukovic, Minister of the Interior, just to prove his zeal in exterminating the Serbian Orthodox, set an example for others by ordering the massacre of the Serbs in his native district of Ljubuski. Juro Borota, leader of the Ustashi organization in Ljubinje, sent a report to Artukovic informing him that 4,500 Serbian Orthodox had been masacred on the territory of his district in the villages of Vlahovici, Kateza, Grebci, and Ljubinje.

Abdulah Camo, head of the organization, had imprisoned 65 Serbs of Capljina who were killed in the station of the same locality, according to personal order by telephone from Artukovic.

Stipe Varvaric, head of the Ustashi for the district of Mostar, massacred 135 Orthodox Serbs and a number of Jews in the town of Mostar. Artukovic rewarded him by making him Ustashi commissar for the province of Sarajevo.

Franjo Vego, right hand man of Andrija Artukovic, massacred approximately 5,000 Orthodox Serbs in the district of Capljina. Artukovic promoted him to the rank of a Ustashi captain.

It was by the order of Artukovic that Geza Togonal killed 20 people at Gacko, 70 at Korito, 19 at Golubnjaca, and 5 monks in the monastery of Zitomislic.

Sporadic massacres also took place in other regions.

In June 1941, a detachment of 250 Ustashi reached Kupres, commanded by Raphael Boban and Avdo Voluder. The Serbs from the villages of Begovo selo, Gornji Malovan, Blagaj, Vukovsko Donje, Vukovsko Gornje, Rili, Zanoglena, and Ravno,

were ordered to go to Kupres. In the order of their arrival, the Ustashi led them, group by group, outside of the town in a region where numerous deep crevices abound. They were all killed and thrown into the crevices.[38]

A group of 280 persons, the greater part from Donje Vukovsko, were led into a field between the villages of Sujice and Livno where an aviation camp had been set up before the war. The Ustashi killed all these prisoners, threw them into the cisterns which had been previously dug, and poured quick lime over them. The village of Galinjevo, in the district of Duvno, lived through an indescribable tragedy. There were about 20 Serbian homes in this village. An Ustashi, named Kapulica, one of the former maniacs of the party, marched into the village with an armed unit. All the inhabitants were bound with wire and taken to the Prisoj bridge. There they were killed and thrown into the rapids.

The tension mounted from day to day. It began to affect those of the upper level who were considered immune to brutality. Political personalities, as well as those of art and letters supported the Pavelic regime by their personal prestige, such as the sculptor, Ivan Mestrovic who organized Ustashi exhibitions in Zagreb, Italy and Germany.

Even the great Croatian poet, Vladimir Nazor, who later joined Tito was carried away by mass hysteria. It was at this time that he wrote:

> "This is no time for music or mandolines.
> Now is the time for each of us
> To live as wolves, and lions,
> In other words, as Croats!"

On June 2nd, in a speech given at Nova Gradiska, Milovan Zanic, the Minister of Justice and author of many legal decrees, revealed quite clearly the government plan: "This state, our country, is only for Croats and for no one else. There are no ways and means which we Croats will not use to make our country truly ours, and to cleanse it of all Orthodox Serbs. All those who came into our country 300 years ago must disappear. We make no attempt to conceal our intention. It is the policy of our state, and during its realization we shall do nothing else save follow the principles of the Ustashi." [39]

[38] This information was found by Mile Vujinovic and published in a series of articles which were published in the *American Srbobran*, August 1951 (Pittsburg, Pa.).
[39] *Novi List*, June 3, 1941.

BLESSING OF ASSASSINATIONS

The sinister Poglavnik, while addressing the Ustashi army at Zagreb, pronounced these atrocious words: "A good Ustashi is he who can use his knife to cut a child from the womb of its mother."

By referring to the newspaper *Nedelja* of June 6, 1941, which published an article (entitled) "Christ and Croatia," it is obvious how the Catholic press reacted, and it is highly edifying to read: "Christ and the Ustashi, Christ and the Croatians, march together through history. From the first day of its existence the Ustashi movement has been fighting for the victory of Christ's principles, for the victory of justice, freedom and truth. Our Holy Saviour will help us in the future as he has done until now. That is why the new Ustashi Croatia will be Christ's, ours, and no one else's." [40]

A considerable number of the Catholic Croatian clergy were imbued with this incredible exaltation. The episcopacy and just ordinary priests tried to out-do each other in fanatacism. Numerous were those who, like the curate of Ogulin, Ivan Mikan, had become a sworn Ustashi even before the war, and who traveled throughout the country to spread their politico-religious ideology. Mikan, fully deserves the eulogy which appeared in the press: "From the time of his arrival at Ogulin he pursued the national policy in the true Ustashi spirit." [41]

The words of the French author, Jean Hussard, refer to these challenging remarks: "The lower clergy not only tolerated these massacres but was often an accomplice. Young priests enlisted, gun in hand. Is there anyone who believes that religious mysticism, however extreme and primitive, can be associated with assassinations?" [42]

Yet such a thing seemed quite compatible, not only among the lower clergy, but also, and first of all, among those higher up in the hierarchy. Archbishop, Ivan Saric, who has already been mentioned, praised (in his review, *Katolicki Tjednik*) the use of revolutionary methods in the name of truth, justice and honor, and stated that it was "stupid and unworthy of the disciples of Christ to think that struggling against an evil could be done nobly with gloves." [43]

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[40] *Nedelja,* June 6, 1941.
[41] *Nova Hrvatska,* June 1, 1943.
[42] Jean Hussard, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
[43] *Katolicki Tjednik,* June 15, 1941.

To give greater liberty to assassins and torturers would have been impossible. This prelate showed on many an occasion his "Christian spirit," notably when the Catholic wife of Dr. Dusan Jeftanovic, who had been arrested by the Ustashi, begged him to intercede. His Grace Saric replied that since Jeftanovic was an Orthodox Serb he regretted not being able to comply. So the poor man was tortured and then killed in the Zagreb prison.

The "Large cross bearing a Star," which Pavelic conferred on this saintly man was, therefore, more than deserved, as was the flattering citation which accompanied it: "As Archbishop of Bosnia, for his Ustashi Croatian spirit and his work among the clergy and the people." [44]

But it was in the *Katolicki Tjednik,* review of His Grace, Saric, that could be noted in all its ecclesiastical unction this justification of genocide:

> Certainly, it is very hard on those who are paying the price (i.e., Serbs) and on whose back the operations are being carried out. We are all human. We are most sensitive to matters that concern our skin, our existence and our families. Such tragedies hurt the most. It is a matter of piercing live flesh. Hearts tighten, eyes fill with tears, gasps as well as curses spring from the lips. . . . But politics is different. It demands, for the general good and the public interest, a rigid, brutal and iron discipline. It is the men who govern who assume responsibility. This does not concern the individual! Neither does it concern our religious and Catholic consciences! We have another area of action, an area which is small and private. For it we are fully responsible. . . . to God and our Christian consciences.[45]

Terrorism, massacres, and tortures did not seem to interest the Church in the least, nor the consciences of its congregation. Such things were beyond the bounds of their "field of action" and, at that time, as witnesses of so many horrors, their only duty was to say Amen.

His Grace, Pavao Jesih, was no less explicit. As Head of the group of Catholic Action, he presented gifts and congratulations to Ante Pavelic in the names of all the branches of the different organizations, and there was considerable reaction to his words, into which he put the proper seasoning: "We have every reason to think that the Lord has given you His help, for you have succeeded in cleansing our new field of Christianity in Croatia. Guided by the spirit of Christ, and by Ustashi principles, we are

[44] *Novi List,* Nov. 10, 1942.
[45] *Katolicki Tjednik,* June 15, 1941.

now ready for any battle in defense of our beloved Croatia." [46]

Thus encouraged, blessed and incensed by the highest prelates, the Poglavnik could but redouble his efforts in the "mopping-up" process which he had undertaken.

In essence, practically everyone knew about the massacres (including the Vatican), yet no one did anything about it, or even seemed openly concerned.

* * *

In occupied Serbia, an important event was in the offing, concerning the resistance. The Communist party, in joining the game, was bound to modify fundamentally the situation in Yugoslavia, divided into several zones of occupation.

On June 22, 1941, Germany attacked the USSR. The 27th of the month, Tito, who was known by the name of Walter, came from Zagreb to Belgrade, where he organized his headquarters in the villa of his friend Vladimir Ribnikar, the owner-director of the *Politika,* largest and most influential Yugoslav daily paper. In his proclamation, he said:

> Proletarians from all parts of Yugoslavia,—to arms! Rally round your vanguard, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Fulfill your proletarian duties without fear or faltering. Make ready for the final and fateful struggle! You cannot stand idly by whilst the precious blood of the heroic people of Soviet Russia is shed.

Then Tito addressed these secret instructions to the Communist groups:

> The Yugoslav Communist party is now in a position to take an active part in the overthrow of the present monarchial regime and to this end will render assistance to all elements regardless of their ideological outlook and character which are bent on the same purpose. Yugoslavia must first be dissolved into its component parts, and the party will then be able to pursue its work within each of them in accordance with the directives already issued.
>
> Render any assistance necessary to Ustashi, Macedonian, Albanian, and other nationalist organizations, in so far as they may contribute toward the speedy overthrow of the present regime.[47]

At that time, Colonel Mihailovic had already organized the first guerrilla movement of the Second World War. His Chetniks (the official name was "The Yugoslav Army in the Homeland")

[46] *Hrvatski Narod,* June 24, 1941.
[47] Stephen Clissold, *op. cit.,* p. 27.

were in the mountains of Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Lika, Banija, Kordun and Dalmatia. The mountains were crowded with Serbian people who managed to escape the murderous Ustashi. Many clashes soon occurred, but the Serbs had few arms, with the result that Ustashi attacks often resembled a wolf-pack descending on a flock of helpless sheep.

CHAPTER V

Massacres and Forced Conversions

AT THE END of June, 1941, only two and a half months after the proclamation of the "independent" state, all the elements necessary for the great crusade of "croatization" were centralized and controlled by the Ustashi government. For this purpose it had mobilized a small army, formed special divisions, set up a constabulary, diverse police services, and special courts, while being guaranteed the passive benevolence of the Italian and German representatives. The Croatian Peasant party maintained an attitude half way between tacit complicity and effective participation. Finally, the voices of the highest representatives of the Catholic Church throughout the country, by their exhortations from the pulpit and the dithyrambic articles in the newspapers and periodicals, covered, in advance, the acts of the Ustashi government.

On June 26th, Ante Pavelic gave an audience to the Catholic episcopacy. Up to this date, he had already on his account the massacre of 180,000 Serbs and Jews, as well as the martyrdom of three bishops, and more than 100 Serbian Orthodox priests and members of religious orders. Such a list of victims "on his slate," in such a short time, was an auspicious beginning, and gave a true significance to the sermon delivered by His Grace, Stepinac, who said that "as legitimate representatives of the Church of God in the Independent State of Croatia, of which you are the Head, we utter our deference with our whole hearts, and promise our sincere and loyal collaboration for the brightest of futures for our fatherland." [1]

The involvement was, therefore, made as clear as it possibly could be. Two days later, on June 28th, by order of Eugen Kvaternik-Dido, the magnificent Serbian Orthodox cathedral at Bihac was blown up with dynamite. So that the disaster would be more complete, that same day he had 2,000 Serbs and Jews massacred in the town and its surroundings.

The day following, June 29th, the organizations of the Catholic Action, with the "Great Brotherhood of Crusaders," and the "Great Sisterhood of Crusaders" in the lead, took their turn to

[1] *Katolicki List,* n°26, 1941, and *Hrvatski Narod,* June 30, 1941.

render homage to Pavelic, the tireless defender of religious faith.[2]

And again on the next day, June 30th, a new decree (No. 48468/41) was issued with detailed precisions of the terms of the decree of May 3rd, referring to the conversion from one religion to another, which concerned the transfer of the believers of oriental rites [3] to Catholicism. Foreseeing that many among these, being forced to abjure, would prefer embracing the Greek-Catholic religion rather than the Roman Catholic, this eventually was made impossible by the following conditions, only the more important of which are cited here:

> 1. The government stipulates that all persons who follow the Greek oriental rites shall not be allowed to be converted to the Greek Catholic religion, except in parishes where the practice of the Greek-Catholic ritual already exists and is observed by believers of the Greek-oriental rites.
>
> 2. The Eastern Orthodox who register in the offices of Roman Catholic parishes for conversion must show recommendations stamped by the Police or the Town Hall, testifying to their honesty. These recommendations will be delivered after the approval of the Ustashi organizations. The Town Halls and police authorities are ordered to inform the Ministry of Cults and Justice after each recommendation has been delivered.
>
> 3. When these certificates are delivered attention must be paid not to give them to priests, shop-keepers, artisans, rich Orthodox peasants and, in general, to Orthodox Intellectuals, except in cases where personal integrity can be proved, the government having come to a foregone conclusion that recommendations concerning such categories of people are unacceptable.
>
> 5. Peasants may obtain these recommendations without difficulty, except in exceptional cases.
>
> 7. Persons of Greek-Eastern ritual or others transferring to Protestantism, and registering in the Kulturbund, without belonging, by origin, to the German minority, may not benefit of the same rights as those enjoyed by the German National minority.
>
> 8. The Minister of Agriculture, that is, the "State Direction for Renovation," will handle questions in agreement with the Ministry of Justice in all that concerns building and land-owning by the Eastern Orthodox Church.[4]

This regulation was signed by the Minister of the Interior, Andrija Artukovic, and the Minister of Justice, Mirko Puk.

The Government published, as a supplement, a legal clause

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[2] See *Nedelja,* June 29, 1941.

[3] This was the "official" Croatian term designating the Serbian Orthodox.

[4] *Katolicki List,* Zagreb 1941. Stepinac signed it August 5, 1941, see V. Novak, *op. cit.,* p. 621.

which referred to minors CCCLXXXVI-1926-Z, 1941 and which read as follows: "If the father is absent or has disappeared, the mother's approval for conversion of minors up to the age of eighteen years is sufficient. The Guardian's Court decision is unnecessary." [5]

This circular under No. 11.530 of August 5, 1941, was forwarded at once to the entire clergy subordinate to Archbishop Stepinac. It read as follows: "This circular is sent to all the clergy to inform them regarding those who are to be converted. Each person, beside being in possession of the document of release from the Greek Eastern Church, must also be in possession of a document from the District or Police Authorities as to their character. With regard to the indoctrination of converts, you are referred again to the Circular issued on July 11, 1941, No. 7726, i.e., specifically point 4 of this Circular." [6]

This policy of converting the Serbs to Catholicism, which was persistently carried out by Zagreb at the time of one of the greatest cataclysms that humanity has ever known, was clearly expressed in what the *Katolicki Tjednik* wrote in an article entitled, "Conversions":

> The question of conversion to Catholicism is once more present on our territory. It has become evident owing to political conditions. People today may easily begin to think that it would be opportune to become Catholic, regardless of motives which have nothing to do with inner feelings. Catholicism today in our country is the religion of the majority. The Catholic adherents (Croats are often identified with Catholicism for practical reasons) are politically and socially in a much more favorable position than the adherents of other faiths and national groups. By being converted, a person guarantees for himself many a privilege which otherwise he may lose.[7]

By such means, the political and ecclesiastical newspaper of The Sarajevo *"Captol"* produced psychological and political pressure on the free conscience of the people and their religion, as well as on their national awareness, mostly on congregational and national groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina who had been deprived from the very first days of the Independent State of Croatia, of all human rights as well as of God's Laws.

The Ministry of Interior by its circular No. 34238-MUO-41 of

[5] *Narodne Novine,* November 5, 1941.

[6] Sima Simic, *Prekrstavanje Srba za vrijeme Drugog Svetskog Rata* (Conversion of Serbs during the Second World War), p. 61.

[7] *Katolicki Tjednik,* August 17, 1941, p. 3.

September 16, 1941, issued the following instruction concerning an accelerated conversion to Catholicism:

> You are advised to handle all matters in connection with the conversion with speed and without delay; it is specifically required that taxes are not to be collected from the persons in question, nor any fees which are not legally applicable.
>
> By the circular of the Ministry of Interior of September 16, 1941, No. 34238-MUO-41, the soul-saving clergy was asked to "report to the Ministry any act committed by any persons of authority wherein anything contrary to our intentions may be undertaken, in order that strict measures may be applied against them." [8]

This circular issued by the government as well as by the Vicar of Zagreb clearly proved that the Ustashi authorities and the Church had a full understanding concerning the conversion of Orthodox Serbs and that the Zagreb Archbishopric had breached its canon No. 1351.

The conversion was represented not only as an internal right of the Catholic Church, but as a political right of the Ustashi authorities as well, because the members of the Committee for Conversion "will work in accordance with the Minister of Justice and Religion" in matters concerning provisions on the conversion of citizens. In this way, the clergy and the Ustashi paralleled each other in the conversion of Serbs and acquired a concrete form of collaboration and relationship in their work.

It was obvious that it was only by conversion to the Roman Catholic religion and to no other, that the Ustashi government hoped to "croatize" that part of the Serbian population which had not been purely and simply exterminated. Thus, *a priori,* certain categories of people were refused admission to the Church of Rome.

These converters professed ideas that were strangely heterodox in the opinion of the true believers. However, they were not afraid of showing their ideas to the Catholic hierarchy, as can be proved by the letter (No. 42687B) which the Minister of Justice addressed to the Episcopal Ordinariates, in which he said: "We beg the honorable Ordinariates to give information, quite confidentially, to all parish offices concerning the question of accepting the Serbian Orthodox to the Catholic religion. The Serbian Orthodox will not, in any case, be permitted to embrace the Greek-Catholic religion. The Croatian government has no in-

[8] *Katolicki List,* September 1, 1941, p. 462.

tention of accepting teachers, priests or intellectuals, wealthy merchants, artisans, and Serbian peasants in the Catholic Church, because of eventual ulterior measures to be taken concerning this category of people, and in order not to compromise the Catholic religion. Consequently only the poor and ignorant among the Orthodox will be accepted, on condition that they have had previous training in the knowledge and Truth of the Catholic faith. In cases where others might insist on conversion, they must be subtly turned away on account of their failure to meet the demands of the Catechumen, or else be refused without any pretext whatsoever." The Ordinariates gave their adhesion to this cynical document. The following reply from the Ordinariate in Zagreb was issued the following day, July 16th (letter No. 9259/1941):

In all that pertains to the conversion of priests, merchants and intellectuals in general, as well as to the well-to-do Orthodox, it remains without the slightest doubt that the greatest prudence and discretion should be observed as to their being accepted. In this respect we should specify that it would be contrary to the mission of the Catholic Church if, on general principles, it refused intellectuals desirous of being converted to the Catholic religion. For indeed, Christ came into this world to save all men and enlighten them with the knowledge of Truth. It is also the duty of the Church, a duty that is as difficult as it is holy, to abide by Christ's commandment: "Go thou and spread the Gospel to all human beings." Divine mercy falls, without discrimination, on every human soul and no one shall deny that just because of these difficult times a great number of people will at last become conscious of the Truth. Barring the way of these Orthodox intellectuals to learn the Truth would not only be inopportune but also contrary to the divine mission of the Church of Christ. It has sometimes happened, though not frequently, that the educated Orthodox adhered to the Catholic faith with deep sincerity, a faith even surpassing that of the Catholics themselves in religious practice. It is just as possible for them to do so at the present time. Divine mercy can never be barred nor restricted.

This is why we are taking the liberty of pointing out that the Church can never relinquish its rights and its divine mission by refusing to take the schismatics to its bosom, for it fully realizes that their desire to become members of the Roman Catholic Church is based upon honesty and sincerity.

The government's wish that each request for conversion be transmitted to the Ministry, accompanied by the recommendation of the parish office, and the National Ustashi organization is largely in order to avoid overloading the clergy, already so overburdened by its multiple duties.

We agree with you on the question of accepting the poorer class of the Orthodox, for having no material interests to safeguard, we

may be sure that they have only the sincerest intentions. However, in this case the Church should make sure that the holiness of religion is not compromised or profaned.

In concluding, the Ordinariat will make every effort to take the Croatian government's intentions into account, and, hoping that the honorable ministers will understand, act within the limits of its possibilities, yet with certain restrictions concerning any concrete case that might be contradictory to the supreme law; the gospel law of Jesus Christ.[9]

This response, imbued with obvious dignity, served as a saving grace, at least as far as it was possible to save it in such a risky conjuncture. But by a careful analysis of the form, it was not successful in hiding what lay underneath, which was much less edifying. It can therefore be observed that:

1. The Ordinariate was in absolute agreement with the Ustashi Government, forbidding the Serbian Orthodox to be converted to the Greek-Catholic instead of the Roman Catholic religion. It could hardly have been otherwise, since the interests of the government and the Croatian Catholic hierarchy were identical in their aims—catholisize and croatisize.

2. The Catholic hierarchy did not refuse the recommendations of the police, the Town Halls and the National Ustashi organizations concerning the "honesty" of people who asked to be converted, in spite of the fact that these recommendations were of a purely political character. It therefore agreed to catholisize persons whose registration had been previously examined by the state administration, the Town Halls and the Ustashi organization. However, the episcopacy wanted to avoid conversions being held up by administrative formalities which would have meant the loss of very precious time for the missionaries.

3. The few restrictions which were indicated, and which concerned the total eviction of intellectuals and members of the middle class, failed to conceal the basic agreement on this subject. Naturally, a few ostensible conversions of well-known intellectuals was a marvelous help to propaganda but the "great prudence involved by their acceptance" was quite significant of the Catholic hierarchy's great distrust of this category of Serbian Orthodox, which it considered the standard-bearer of Serbian nationalism.

If the hierarchy desired not "to exclude all possibility of teaching the Truth to all Orthodox intellectuals," if it acknowledged the fact that certain proselytes had been able, in times gone by,

[9] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, pp. 622-623.

to surpass even the Catholics in the practice of religion, it took great care not to say so much for the well-to-do class. The fate which the Ustashi government reserved for them could hardly be ignored—death and the confiscation of their possessions. The *Poglavnik* and his henchmen, ardent converters as they were, did not mean to let this rich prey escape them, and they did not hide the fact that the "ulterior motives" concerning such a prey could, in the case of conversion, put the Catholic Church in a very precarious situation. So this explains why the poor could be accepted, whereas the "others" if they insisted, could be put off "by very subtle tactics" or else be categorically refused.

But the worst was contained in that frightful phrase: "Who can deny that it is just during these difficult times that a great number of people will become conscious of the Truth?" The hope could hardly have been more clearly expressed that the physical and moral suffering, and the martyrdom of the people, would end by the breaking of ties with the ancestral faith and the eventual subjugation to the Roman Church.

As to the question concerning the sincere and spontaneous adhesion exacted by the Canon Law, these strange theologians seemed to have no memory concerning the care with which they pointed up this "eloquent clause," which from time to time would be referred to, when the persecution reached its climax, in an attempt to divert world public opinion. Even Rev. Marcone, the apostolic visitor, or the "Sancti Sedis legatus," as he seemed to prefer, who was the representative sent direct from the Holy See, was careful not to say a word.

He was also careful not to break the silence and to remind the numerous ecclesiastics, from bishops to monks, when they openly preached in favor of the massacres and who even took a hand in them, of their first obligations to their ministry and the respect they owed to their sacred robes. "Thou shalt not kill," said the Decalogue. Yet the time-old commandment was violated daily, even by those whose mission it was to teach it, while the hierarchy with the representative of the Pope at its head, never blamed them. Even the official organizers of the forced conversions and killings, such as the Prefects and the Ustashi Chiefs of Police, were recruited largely among the priests and the monks. Such was the case, it must be remembered of Bozidar Bralo, Prefect of Eastern Bosnia; Dragutin Kamber, Chief of Police at Doboj; Ante Djuric, Chief of Police at Dvor na Uni; Kaurinovic, member of the liquidation committee of the Serbian Orthodox and Jews

at Prijedor; Nikola Tojcic, member of this same committee at Sanski Most; Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorovic, commander of the concentration camp at Jasenovac, to cite only a few.

Today it has been proved that in spite of an intense propaganda, the Croatian Catholic peasantry contributed only a small contingent of killers and collaborators to the Ustashi movement (approximately 5%). The fanatics of Croatian nationalism were to be found mostly among artisans, shopkeepers, functionaries, or officers of low rank, who were social misfits. Students, seminarists and priests were also very numerous, above all, in the Franciscan and Jesuit orders.

Only one day after the circular of the Zagreb Ordinariate of July 16, 1941 had been passed, as quoted here, the Holy Congregation for the Eastern Church sent out instructions on July 17, 1941 (Prot. No. 2116), to the President of the Conference of Bishops in Zagreb, in connection with conversion to Catholicism. Those instructions read as follows:

> The Holy Congregation for the Eastern Church desires to point out to your Excellency that the Roman Catholic priests in Croatia should be instructed by their Reverend Bishops that they are not to prevent those who are not united (Dissidents), from their natural return to the Eastern Rites, when concerning those who had been members of the Catholic Church (unity) of Eastern Rites, but who under threats and pressure by the Orthodox people had withdrawn from the Catholic Religion. If your Excellency would be good enough to point out this situation to the brethren (Bishops) of Croatia, they will acquire new merit by this favorable contribution to the proper development of Catholicism, where so many hopes exist for the conversion of those who are not united with us.[10]

In this instruction from the Vatican, the old theme of the Ustashi and Croat clergy is repeated, i.e., that there were no Orthodox people before in Croatia, and that they only came there as settlers or were converted to the Orthodox religion by force. But the fallacy of this will be proved later, when Cardinal Tisserant denied this thesis personally and told one of the Ustashi representatives at the Vatican that he was very well acquainted with the history of Christianity, but that he did not remember a single instance in which the Catholics were forced into mass conversion to Orthodoxy.

In this instruction issued by the Vatican, it is a question of conversion from the Orthodox Religion into the Greek Eastern

[10] Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen*, p. 629.

Religion, and not Roman Catholicism. But the Vatican stated that this became valid for conversion to the Roman Catholic Rites as well. This was in accordance with the regulation passed by the Holy See of October 18, 1941, which read as follows: "Wherever there are already established Greek Catholic parishes, those who are not united should be sent there to become united, if they wish to be so. However, in cases where those who have been separated and are not reunited do not want to or cannot keep up their Eastern Rites, they are to be free to join the Latin Rites." [11]

A religious department was founded in Zagreb in June 1941 (decree No. 11689), next to the State "Direction for Renovation," for the purpose of more efficiently organizing and extending the work carried on exclusively by the missionaries. The priest, Dionis Juricev, who has already been mentioned, became the Head of this organization.

On July 18, 1941, the government promulgated the decree No. 753-Z 1941 (Official Journal, *Narodne Novine,* July 19, 1941), which stipulated: "After the foundation of the Independent State of Croatia, the Serbian Orthodox religion is considered no longer compatible with the new state order. Thenceforward, this religion will be called 'The Greek religion of oriental ritual.' "

The "evangelization" activities began by a muted propaganda: the Catholics, it was said, would be the only real citizens and would enjoy all civic rights. The pressure became felt more imperiously from one day to the next. There were numerous priests who had no scruples about openly pointing up the situation in order to encourage the conversions. The example had been set by those of the higher hierarchy. His Grace, Aksamovic, Bishop of Djakovo, in a proclamation to the Serbian Orthodox within his diocese, had exhorted them in the following terms: "Up until now I have received into the fold of the Catholic Church several dozens of thousands of Serbian Orthodox. Follow the example of these brothers of yours, and send, without further delay, your request for your prompt conversion to Catholicism. By being converted to the Catholic Church you will be left in peace in your homes. And thus you will have assured the salvation and the immortality of your souls. . . ." [12]

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[11] *Tajni Dokumenti* o *odnosima Vatikana i Ustaske Nezavisne Drzave Hrvatske* (Secret Documents on Vatican relations with the Independent State of Croatia), p. 95.

[12] Joza Horvat and Zdenko Stambuk, *Dokumenti o protunarodnom radu i zlocinima jednog dijela katolickog klera* (Documents concerning anti-national work and crimes of one part of the Catholic clergy), Zagreb 1946, p. 55.

It must at least be acknowledged that the words of this worthy prelate were extremely lucid. In his diocese alone, twenty Serbian Orthodox churches were destroyed or turned over to the Catholic faith.

A reflection of the methods used to increase, at any price, the number of catechumens of the Roman Church, is found in a memorandum sent in the name of the Holy Synod, Aug. 1941, by the Serbian Orthodox bishop of Budim, Valerian Pribicevic, to General Dankelmann, commanding the German occupation troops in Serbia. The Bishop gave alarming reports concerning the atrocities committed among the unprotected Serbian population in Croatia, notably in the Serbian provinces of Lika, Kordun, Banija, Srem and Bosnia-Herzegovina. After having pointed out the Ustashis' infamous crimes, the signer of the memorandum rose up in protest:

> From the very beginning, the Ustashi authorities have inaugurated a system of terror, whereby they have forced many Orthodox Serbs to be converted to the Catholic faith. The close co-operation between the Catholic Church and the Ustashi authorities is known, which is also evidenced by the fact that among the Ustashi officials there are a great number of Catholic priests. The first intimidation for conversion to Catholicism was directed against the State's employees, who were advised that in the Croatian State's employ only those Orthodox people might remain who would embrace the Catholic faith, but in effect this was only a ruse. Thus depriving the Serbian people of having their clergy, the Roman Church forced the Orthodox people to the Catholic rites. According to the testimony of Reverend Janko Veljakovic, pastor of Grbovic, the Catholic priests there led the armed Ustashi in the closing of Orthodox churches and the confiscation of church records, also in the plundering of all church valuables. At Banja Luka, an official order was issued directing that all the Orthodox Church records (of marriages, baptisms, burials, etc.) be delivered forthwith to Catholic parishes, which order was later extended throughout the territory of the former Croatian province. Catholic priests took possession of the Serbian Bishops' residence at Pakrac and locked and sealed the Cathedral, all of which occurred April 12, 1941.
>
> All over the territory of the Croatian State the Serbian Orthodox Churches are being destroyed . . . [13]

But no surer testimony could be desired than that of the inhabitants of Staza, who made the following deposition concern-

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[13] *Martyrdom of the Serbs* (prepared and issued by the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese for the United States of America and Canada) (Chicago: Palendech's Press, 1943).

ing the conduct of the priest, Dionis Juricev, Head of the Religious Department:

Dionis Juricev threatened us in pronouncing the following words: "Thenceforward only Croats will be allowed to live in this country because the country belongs to the Croats, and we shall have to take action against those who refuse to be converted. I have succeeded in cleansing other regions and have rid them of everyone, from infants to old men, and if it is necessary I shall do the same thing here. It is no longer considered a sin to kill a child of seven if he interferes with the Ustashi law and order. Although I wear the robes of a priest, I am often obliged to resort to the machine gun, and the minute anyone is against the state or the Ustashi who are in power, I make good use of it right down to the cradle." [14]

These very words, uttered by the "missionaries" own Head, leaves no doubt as to the way the "conversions under no constraint," which alone were considered valid (article 1351 of the Canon Law) were conducted. Thus the conversions can be explained, notably the one undertaken collectively such as those listed here below: "The entire village of Budimci was converted to Catholicism on Sunday Sept. 14, 1941. Preliminary instruction had been given by the Franciscan brother, Sidonije Scholz. Scholz and several priests attended the ceremony and also the "grand zupan" (Prefect of the Department) of Baranja. During the banquet many speeches were made, accompanied by toasts to the *Poglavnik* and to Croatia." [15]

The pressure exerted on human consciences was nothing compared to the expeditious methods used eventually by the converters and their acolytes. Moreover, if a certain progression in violence could be observed, it was only relative, as has already been pointed out, since in Bosnia-Herzegovina, above all, it had started at the beginning of the Ustashi rule.

The incredible cruelty of Viktor Gutic, governor of western Bosnia, must again be mentioned, for it was he who, in committing other atrocities, martyred the Serbian Orthodox Bishop Platon. His fury also descended upon the churches. He had the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral at Banja Luka destroyed and used Jewish and Serbian prisoners to do the work. Then, in turn, came the churches in the neighborhood of Prnjavor, and many

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[14] Joza Horvat and Zdenko Stambuk, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
[15] *Katolicki List*, No. 38, 1941.

others, much to the satisfaction of his collaborator, the Jesuit priest, Dragutin (Charles) Kamber, now in the United States, sworn Ustashi and Chief of Police at Doboj (Central Bosnia), who alone was responsible for various noted crimes such as the "liquidation" of the Serbian clergy of that region and 300 Orthodox Serbs of that city with another 250 courtmartialed in his district on his orders. Also there was confiscation of Jewish property.[16]

Published in the newspaper *Novi List* on August 16, 1941, Dr. Kamber said of the Nazis who were in Doboj:

> We [Ustashi] love you sincerely as friends; we respect you highly; and all of us are sorry, deeply sorry, that you must part. We love you! We love you because you carry in your hands the most powerful sword that has ever been forged in the history of mankind.
>
> You are brothers and manly knights by your behavior and by your deeds. The Paradise to which the Germans are going needs no better propagandists than the soldiers of Germany, this German Army. We respect you because you are fighting to give political and social justice to all of Europe. With the blood and the bones of precious German soldiers, the flower of Germany, you are building the foundations of a happy world for future generations.

In a Sarajevo newspaper, called *Osvit,* Kamber on December 18, 1942 wrote: "Why do I want the Germans and their Allies Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, etc., to win? Because without the Germans our nation would die and we would have no Independent State of Croatia. From the international point of view the Germans and the Ustashi have the same enemies."

Father Charles (Dragutin) Kamber is now in the U.S.A. He is writing in many Croatian newspapers all over the world, especially in *Danica* (Chicago). He is teaching the Ustashi in exile how to fight on for the Independent State Croatia, by new methods. He has written a booklet on how to behave in the world even though still an Ustasha (once an Ustasha—an Ustasha till death was the Ustashi's slogan). The booklet has the title, "Problems and Methods to Be Used in the Fight to Free Croatia."

Henceforward, there will be only too often an occasion to perceive the great preponderance of action taken by the Catholic ecclesiastics in the unleashing of every kind of violence. The Croatian papers of this period give ample proof of this by their

[16] *Hrvatski Narod,* June 12, 1941.

virulent articles, as well as by the innumerable photographs, where the pictures of such prelates as Archbishop Ivan Saric, can be admired with other priests and religious officials, and even the fanatical Sisters, saluting Hitlerian fashion, with raised arm, their bosoms laden with shining Ustashi decorations. And the Sisters could even be seen in a military parade, marching four abreast, in the streets of Zagreb, flanked by Pavelic's militia.

With such support, the government, from then on, felt invincible and started to expose its future program without further reticence, and it was the Minister of Education, Mile Budak, who, by chance, took charge of announcing the final arrangements.

Previously, on July 13, 1941, he had already emphasized the details of governmental decisions: "The Ustashi movement is based on religion. Therefore our acts stem from our devotion to religion and to the Catholic Church." [17]

This, of course, was the logical introduction to statements he would make on July 22, during a conference at Gospic: "We shall kill one part of the Serbs, we shall transport another, and the rest of them will be forced to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. This last part will be absorbed by the Croatian elements." [18]

His assistant, the *doglavnik*, Mile Budak, brilliantly explained the situation on August 3, 1941: "It can be seen that the real truth is what our Poglavnik has proclaimed. Justice cannot always be obtained by lawful acts, and sometimes has to be imposed by hatchets and guns. This is the reason why I have warned the Serbs' nest at Prnjavor that when I see them it will take me only twenty-four hours to kill everyone, and you will help me do this." [19]

This ultimate decision was therefore taken, and those who were the least informed as to the intentions of the Ustashi concluded that the numerous arrests and massacres, which had been already perpetrated in the country, were not limited to local and sporadic outbursts. On the contrary, in the opinion of the Ministry of Cults, this represented government policy.

Franz Borkenau, commenting on the systematic extermination, wrote, in 1951:

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[17] *Katolicki Tjednik,* August 17, 1941.

[18] Avro Manhattan, *Terror over Yugoslavia* (London, 1953), p. 60; and Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 605.

[19] Jean-Marc Sabathier in the Magazine *Paris-Match,* May 25, 1957, p. 23.

As after the fall of the Hapsburg Empire, Croat nationalism evolved into the demand for a Greater Croatia including all Bosnia, the Serb enclave in the innermost corner of Bosnia, and in the coastal regions became a thorn in the Croats flesh.

It would have been consonant with the accepted standards of this our civilized age to transplant this whole group to Serbia forcibly, but the new Ustashi rulers of Croatia, "Poglavnik" Pavelic and Marshall Kvaternik knew of a still more effective solution. Why increase the military strength of Serbia by giving it more men? Better to kill the animal on the spot! A certain ritual was followed in carrying this policy through. Ustashi detachments arrived in the Serb villages and summoned the inhabitants (if they did not proceed to slaughter at once) to accept immediately the Roman Catholic faith, thus transforming themselves, from Serbs, into Croats. Those who refused conversion—and they were in a large majority, since to these western Serbs religion meant everything—were told to assemble in their church. Then the church doors were locked, the church went up in flames, and men, women and children perished with it. Only the massacre of the Jews provided a parallel to these horrors.[20]

The "thorns" to which the author referred were the Serbs who had as we have explained in the first pages of this volume settled in Croatia since the fifteenth century, and who had defended it against Turkish domination. Since then every effort to "croatize" and "catholisize" this population had been futile. It was composed of 800,000 souls before the Yugoslav debacle in 1941. This opportunity for getting rid of them, therefore, seemed providential to the Ustashi government, and they were sure of succeeding quite easily if they adopted the same methods as the great Hitlerian Reich. But there remained the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina which the Croats now controlled and which they hoped to annex permanently. And it was there that 1,200,000 Serbian Orthodox resided. The problem was how to get the best of such large human masses, nearly three times more numerous than the Catholic population. This was Pavelic's great dilemma and all the repeated massacres, concentration camps and deportations to Serbia, could not solve it.

There is a proverb: "Necessity finds a way." And so it was that the Ustashi decided to make use of nature to facilitate their duty as killers. The country abounded in deep crevices and gorges. The Drina especially had worn its bed between Bosnia and Serbia through a succession of wild and grandiose canyons, somewhat similar to those in Colorado. These admirable sites

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[20] Franz Borkenau, *European Communism* (London, 1951), p. 371.

would serve as cemeteries and slaughterhouses both at the same time. The work would thus be simplified and all that sufficed was to push the victims off the steep cliffs. So this method was adopted for the Serbs who lived along the river in western Bosnia, and their bodies, mingling with those of the Jews, were so numerous in certain places, that they were used as a bridge for the massacrers to cross.

"Across the Drina—or into the Drina," expulsion or physical extermination, such was the formula, terrifying in its merciless simplicity.[21]

It was not astonishing that for slaughter on such a huge scale, Pavelic appealed to his old friend and accomplice, Vancha Mihailoff, the Bulgarian leader of the IMRO who had been such a competent henchman in the assassination of King Alexander. Therefore, this specialist went to live in Zagreb in a luxurious villa which the Poglavnik placed at his disposal.

No detail was overlooked in bringing this gigantic undertaking to a successful conclusion, for it meant the immolation of a whole people. Like the Hitlerians in Poland, yet considerably outdoing them in cruelty, specialized units plowed the way, just as Tamerlane or Genghis Khan had done in times gone by. The most noted was the "Devil's Decision" or the "Black Legion," and all the indescribable crimes that were committed on the banks of the Drina could never be counted, nor those at the extreme point of Bosnia in the districts of Bosanski Petrovac, Kljuc, Sanski Most and Bosanska Krupa.[22]

The "Black Legion" committed such crimes that the German military authorities were obliged to disarm it. In the German military report of June 7, 1942 to the German Commanding General in Zagreb we can read:

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[21] Clissold, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

[22] The tragedy of the Serbian people is expressed in these funeral chants based on folklore. Here, below, is one dedicated to twelve young girls from the village of Dobroselo, in the district of Donji Lapac, province of Lika, who were killed by the Ustashi, and whose names with the dates of their birth, are cited:

"It was the day of June 12th
When twelve Serbian young girls were shot down
Twelve young girls, twelve falcons
By Ustashi shot and shell.
The poor mothers hunted through the forest
With their heart-breaking cries: 'Where is my child?' "

Darinka Medic (1928, Koviljka Medic (1929), Mara Medic (1928), Sofija Medic (1928), Smilja Medic (1928), Mara Djapa (1928), Smilja Djapa (1927), Smilja Kerkez (1924), Milka Kerkez (1930), Mileva Kerkez (1929), Jelka Kerkez (1930), and Soka Rajic (1912).

"By orders of the Commanding officer of the 718 Infantry Division, the Ustashi regiment 'Francetic' was disarmed and arrested by the field police because this regiment was suspected of having once more committed atrocities against the Serbian population. Investigation is on the way."

German General Lothar Rendulic in a postwar book, had this to say about the massacres in Croatia:

> While German troops were still in several places in Croatia, the Croatians began a beastly persecution of the Orthodox. At this time at least a half million people were killed. An unbelievable governing mentality was responsible, as I learned in August 1943 when I received the answer to a question of mine from a government functionary in the circle of the chief of state. When I said that I could not at all understand how it was possible, in spite of all the hatred, to kill half a million people, he answered: "Half a million is libelous. No more than 200,000 were killed." Against that type of thinking . . . one can do nothing with arguments. During the period of my command, signs appeared of a new persecution of the Orthodox. That persecution caused me no end of trouble and I finally had to put a stop to it with energetic measures and threats of force.[23]

At Prebilovci and Surmanci, in Herzegovina, 559 Serbs, all of them old men, women and children, were led to a deep crevice called "Golubinka," massacred and then thrown into space. And to do the job more thoroughly, hand grenades were hurled down upon the dying bodies. The names of the assassins have been kept: Ivan Jovanovic, Mirko Ankovic-Arar, Mate Ivankovic, Andrija Seco, Joze Jerkovic, Jozo Ostojic, Vasilj Jakov, Filoj Jerkovic, Bozo Turudic, Jozo Prusac, Vasilj Mate, Ivan Soce, Tadija Jerkovic and Ludvig Jovanovic, to which should be added the two Catholic priests Ilija Tomas and Marko Zovko.

This ravine swallowed up several tens of thousands of men, women and children. Drago Svjetlicic, a barber from Doboj, said the following about this "valley of death" in Velebit:

> The prison in Gospic was the gathering point for all the Serbs in Croatia, whom the local authorities had designated to be sent to Velebit. During the time that I had spent in this prison, i.e., from August 8th, when I was brought there, to August 25, 1941, a convoy was formed each day in the yard of the prison and was taken to Velebit, and each time this convoy was formed it contained approximately 800 to 1,200 people. They were tied two by two together with a wire and then were connected with one long chain through the

[23] *Gekampft Gesiegt Geschlagen* (Heidelburg, 1952), p. 161.

> middle of the convoy. Each night the Ustashi guards who took them to Velebit returned to the prison, dragging behind them the long connecting chain, which was used the next day for the following convoy. In this way, during my stay there, 18,000 Serbs were taken to Velebit and were killed on the head by blunt instruments, and then thrown into the deep ravine among the rocks. . . .[24]

Another reporter observed: "During our journey toward the hill of Javor, near Srebrenica and Ozren, all the Serbian villages which we came across were wholly massacred. In the villages between Vlasenica and Kladanj we discovered children who had been impaled upon stakes, their small limbs still distorted by pain, resembling insects stuck through by pins."[25]

Throughout the territory of satellite Croatia there was an orgy of bloodshed. In three days 5,000 people perished in the district of Sanski Most and Kljuc. Of the 128 Serbs in the first town, 120 were put to death. A poor widow named Ivanic lost seven sons there, all on the same day.

At Mliniste, in the district of Glamoc, Luka Avramovic, former member of parliament, and his son, were crucified and buried in their own home.

Near Medak, in the district of Gospic, the Ustashi tortured and massacred a group of Serbs on May 1941, among whom was the Serbian Orthodox priest, Milos Mandic, from Gracac. His head was cut off and hung up on the branches of a tree. On the same spot they massacred Petar-Pejo Potkonjak and Jovan Obradovic-Baja from Divoselo.

In the village of Citluk, located at the foot of a mountain, on August 5, 1941 the Ustashi massacred 907 persons from Ornice, Citluk and Divoselo.

On July 29, 1941, Bozidar Cerovski, leader of a Ustashi detachment from Zagreb, went to Vojnic. He succeeded in encircling approximately 3,000 Serbs and massacred every last one in the localities of Krnjak, Krotinje, Siroka Reka, Slunj, Rakovica, and other neighboring villages.

The Ustashi, in order to more easily assemble their victims into groups, resorted to great cunning. The conversions gave them an excellent pretext.

The Ustashi authorities issued a proclamation on August 1 and 2, 1941 to the Orthodox population of Virgin Most and

[24] Psunjski, *Hrvati u svjetlosti Istoriske Istine* (The Croats in the Light of Historical Truth), Belgrade, 1944, p. 200.

[25] Herve Lauriere, *Assassins au nom de Dieu* (Paris, 1951), p. 58.

Cemernica, in which it was said that all those from 16 to 60 years of age were to come on August 3rd to Vrgin Most at the specified place, where a special delegate, who was the representative of the Catholic Church, would come to convert them to the Catholic Religion. The people were threatened in this proclamation by death in their own homes if they did not appear the next day at the said place, the punitive expeditions would go from Orthodox house to Orthodox house to see who had remained behind and only the lives of those who came to Vrgin Most would be safe. Terror reigned in the consciousness of the religious Orthodox people. On August 3, 1941, 3,000 Serbs appeared at the specified place. They waited that whole afternoon and were then informed that they would have to spend the night there because the Bishop was delayed. But to make things safe, they were barricaded. On the next day, instead of priests, a large number of trucks arrived into which all the Serbs were herded. They were told that they would be taken to Glina, where the priest was waiting for them, and after the ceremony, they would be returned to their homes. Serbs from the locality of Topusko were brought there in this same manner. The male population of the Glina district was collected by means of village blockades, which the Ustashi set up with the assistance of the Domobran units. This enormous mass of people, instead of being brought to the place where conversions were performed, were put in various prisons, from where they were taken by night in groups of 1,000 to the local Orthodox Church, and where every single one of them was murdered by Ustashi knives. Trucks came, and the bodies were thrown in and taken to previously prepared mass graves outside the town. The entire road was spattered with blood.

In the Glina Church, 2,000 Serbian men, women and children were slaughtered in this way. The last group of Serbs were burned together with the church and its priest, Bogdan Opacic.

This slaughter was organized by Minister of Justice, Dr. Mirko Puk, who was from Glina, and by Hermenegildo alias Castimir Hermann, custodian of the Cutnica Monastery.

Sapic succeeded in escaping with a small group, while the others were carried away in trucks to the small town of Glina and massacred inside the church.

The Ustashi took a few hundred Serbs to the church under the pretext of converting them. As soon as the doors were closed the slaughtering began. The victims were all massacred with àxes and knives. Jednak Ljuban, who managed to jump off the truck

loaded with bodies which were being taken to be buried, said that only those who could show certificates of their conversion to Catholicism were spared.

Among the victims were 37 children less than ten years of age. The massacring continued relentlessly. About two thousand people perished. It was a veritable Sr. Bartholomew's night. Once the bloody work was over, the Ustashi set fire to the church.

The empty space which remains is still visible today, an enduring testimony of this frightful crime organized by the Minister of Justice, Mirko Puk (originally from Glina), and Castimir Hermann, brother superior of the Catholic monastery of Cuntic. Moreover, all the Franciscans of this monastery wore revolvers instead of crosses on their robes.

> At Korenica hundreds of persons were killed but before they died many of them had their ears and noses cut off and then they were compelled to graze in the meadow. The tortures the most frequently applied were beatings, severing of limbs, goring of eyes and breaking of bones. Cases are related of men being forced to hold red-hot bricks, dance on barbed wire with naked feet and wear a wreath of thorns. Needles were stuck in fingers under the nails, and lighted matches held under their noses.
>
> Of the murders on the large scale in the village of Korito 103 peasants were severely tortured, tied in bundles and thrown in a pit . . . then gasoline was poured over all the bodies and ignited.

Marija Bogunovic of Lijevno also escaped and made the following declaration at the Refugee Center in Belgrade: "On August 20, 1941 a group of Ustashi arrested all the Serbs of Lijevno and took them to the forest of Koprivnica between Bugojno and Kupres. Everyone of them was killed there. A few days afterwards their families were also led to the same forests where they met the same fate. The Ustashi raped the women and the young girls and cut off their breasts, impaled the nursing babies, blinded and cut off the arms and feet of the old men. . . ." [26]

The witness then told how 500 men and children were thrown into the deep grottos between Mount Tusnica and Komasnica where about 80 women and children were massacred in the village school of Celebic.

Thousands of Serbs were thrown into the crevices at Koprivnica, Grabovica, Prisoj and Galinjevo (district of Duvno);

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[26] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 651.

Kruk (district of Livno); Risovac (district of Drvar); Kosinj (district of Perusic); Sinac (district of Otocac); Dolar-Alanak (district of Gospic).

Near Vukovar, on the banks of the Danube, 180 Serbs had their throats cut and were thrown into the river. On August 3rd, 1941, 907 victims were counted in the villages of Ornica, Citluk, and Divoselo; and 500 at Bugojno. In the district of Bosanska Krupa, 540 women and children from the village of Baska, Perna and Polgomolje were closed in and burned alive in their houses. At Crevarevac, 600 people met the same fate.

In a locality called Smiljani, the birthplace of a well-known American scholar, and son of a Serbian Orthodox priest, Nikola Tesla, the Ustashi, Karlo and Frano Devcic, locked 100 Serbian Orthodox in a house and set fire to it. They all perished in the flames. Among them were relatives of Tesla, whom Croats claim as a Croat. What irony! (The church was burned down, too.)

The death list lengthened endlessly. Every leader of a detachment organized a man hunt and then made haste to spread the news to the high officials so he would be decorated for the work he had accomplished.

The Ustashi Commander from Vojnic, telephoned to Zagreb, using these exact words: "Today the hunt was most fruitful, totaling 500."

A veritable hysteria of murder and sadism was engendered in Croatia among those who rallied around the government. On October 16, 1941, Otto Hirst, an escaped Israelite engineer from Zagreb, who had succeeded in reaching Lisbon, stated before the Royal Yugoslav Legation there:

"About three weeks ago, there was a parade in Zagreb, during which one could hear the following remarks:

"I cut the throats of five."

"And I finished off 15."

"And I cut the throats of 21."

"These people," Hirst added, "seemed to think they should be especially congratulated and honored."

PRIESTS AND FRANCISCANS ORGANIZE THE MASSACRES

One would prefer to regard priests and Catholic officials taking part in these atrocious crimes as exceptions. But the truth has to be faced; the active co-operation of many of them in the mas-

sacres has been registered in a mass of documents and reports which do not leave the slightest doubt. It can only be reiterated, time and again, that the lower clergy could hardly have resisted the mad fanaticism which the radio and the Catholic press broadcast throughout the country. Several examples have already been mentioned. But here is one more taken from Archbishop Saric's own paper, and entitled: "Hitler Upholds the Missions." Peter Pajic wrote this article, in which his evangelistic tenderness can be justly appreciated: "Until now, God spoke through papal encyclicals, numerous sermons, catechisms, the Christian press, through missions, through the heroic examples of the saints, and so on . . . . And they closed their ears. They were deaf. Now God has decided to use other methods. He will prepare missions! World missions! They will be upheld not by priests but by army commanders led by Hitler. The sermons will be well heard with the help of cannons, machine guns, tanks and bombers." [27]

Dr. Ivo Guberina, priest, head of Catholic Action and captain of Pavelic's personal bodyguard wrote: "Croatia should purge its system of all poison (Orthodox Serbs) in every possible way, even by the sword, and take any preventive measure whatsoever." [28]

Not the slightest doubt remains that for these priests the Poglavnik was one of the missionaries of modern times and his henchmen were the pious executioners of celestial vengeance. But all this was quite in keeping with the hierarchy's point of view, and even His Holiness received, with honors, on July 22, 1941, a delegation of 100 agents of the Croatian Gestapo, the elite of all the torturers, conducted by their leader, the macabre Kvaternik-Dido, son of Slavko Kvaternik.[29]

It was therefore considered pious for a monk or just a simple priest to contribute any possible help to such a crusade, blessed by the Lord. Among others was a foreign author, who was an eye-witness of this tragedy:

> Even though assassinations involve fatal reprisals, even though the Slavic temperament is known to be blood thirsty, how can one explain the attitude of certain Catholic priests who took part in these assassinations, thus betraying the sacred precepts of Christ? What about the priests who encouraged the massacres of Lijevno? And what

[27] *Katolicki Tjednik*, August 31, 1941.
[28] *Hrvatska Smotra* (Croatian Review), July 7, 1941.
[29] See *Osservatore Romano*, July 22, 1941, and the telegrams of the Fascist agency Stefani and Nazi DNB.

about Leo Petrovic, Superior of the Monastery of Mostar, who himself organized the Ustashi troops? What can be said of the Catholic priest from Glina, urged on by Pavelic's men, to execute the Serbs in the Orthodox church of the town? When Yugoslavia was divided up in 1941, the Catholic clergy in Croatia were in perfect agreement, everywhere, with the promoters of the massacres.[30]

In order to get some idea of the type of mentality that prevailed, certain episodes are interesting, whose documentation is preserved in Italian archives. For example, on May 21, 1941, three persons, among them Father Simic (a Franciscan), came to the commander of the "Sassari Division" in Knin. They announced that they had been selected by the Zagreb government to take over civil authority in that area. The Italian general asked them what would be the line of their policy. "Kill all the Serbs in the shortest possible time," answered Father Simic. The commander of the "Sassari Division" did not believe his ears, and asked him to repeat. "Kill all the Serbs in the shortest possible time. That is our program," repeated Simic. "I am surprised," answered the high Italian officer, "that there is no comprehension of the horror of such a proposal, and that a priest, a Franciscan, should come forth with such an announcement. . . ." There were no means to turn them back, "first of all because the orders from Rome read, 'do not mix in local politics.'" And so they began. . . .[31]

In the whole Catholic Croatian episcopacy there was only one voice that called out to condemn the genocide—that of Alois Misic, Bishop of Mostar. In his pastoral letter of June 30, 1941, he vigorously protested against the Ustashi crimes and reminded the clergy that: "The Holy Church neither wishes, nor is able to absolve those who, contrary to the divine laws, assassinate, destroy, or appropriate the possessions of his fellow men." [32]

Needless to say, His Grace Stepinac was careful not to follow his example. One single priest, J. Loncar from Zagreb, also dared attack those in power and denounce their crimes in a sermon he delivered August 23, 1941, on the theme of: "Thou shalt not kill." He paid the penalty for his heroic act and, though condemned to death, was finally committed to hard labor for life.

Aside from these two kindhearted men, the entire Croatian Catholic clergy either approved or, at least, abstained from con-

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[30] Jean Hussard, *op. cit.*, p. 212.
[31] This summary is from *Il Tempo* (Pag), September 2-9, 1953.
[32] *Dobri Paster* (The Good Shepherd), Zagreb, N°. 8, 1945, p. 5.

demning the immolation of all the Serbs and Jews, some by fanaticism, others by fear, and the remainder by submission to the discipline of the church.

The curate of the town of Udbina, thus preached a new gospel: "Up until now, my brothers, we have been working for our religion with the cross and the breviary, but the time has come when we shall work with a revolver and a rifle." [33]

At a meeting in Udbina, on June 13, 1941, he gave the following homily: "Look, people, at these 16 brave Ustashi, who have 16,000 bullets and who will kill 16,000 Serbs, after which we will divide among us in a brotherly manner the Mutilic and Krbava fields." [34]

These speeches were the signal for starting the slaughter of the Serbs in the district of Udbina.

The Franciscan monk, Silvije Frankovic, was often seen, above all during the massacres of the Serbs in 1941, in the company of the most adominable cutthroats. With them he made up a list of those who must be liquidated. One day in front of the hotel at Bugojno, the well-known killers, Bozica Krizanac, Ivo Jercl and Perica Kutlesa asked him to name the day of their confession: "It's still much too soon for you," he answered. "Once you have liquidated them all, then come to me for the confessional."

The Franciscan, Silvije Frankovic, showed that he was also an ardent missionary. At the time of Markica Pazin's and Milan Sesun's conversion to Catholicism, he said, "It's really too bad that we didn't liquidate the Moslems first, and after that the Serbs."

Branko Ustro, the prefect of Bugojno, in order to clear his guilty conscience from bloodshed, decided to go to confessional where, before Silvije Frankovic, he confessed that he had killed fourteen Serbs. The latter replied, "Once you have liquidated forty then come to confessional and I will pardon all." [35]

Svetozar Bac, an engineer, who had given a detailed description of the mass shooting of Serbs in the school twelve kilometers from Mostar, told the following regarding Ustashi monks:

> Among the persons who enjoyed the spilling of Serbian blood, I have seen several monks, who all wore dark glasses. They approached groups of peasants and spoke to each group in a lively way. They were

[33] *Novi List*, July 24, 1941.
[34] Avro Manhattan, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[35] Horvat and Stambuk, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

the most important people in these Ustashi times and in this Ustashi region. People reported to them, reports were handed to them and orders were accepted from them. They were considered to be the main actors. It was cloudy and cold in those days and even the most sensitive eyes did not need to be protected by dark glasses.

This same thing was related by Milenko Petrovic, a railway station employee at Kastel Stari, where Fra. Berkovic entered one night with the armed Ustashi. Petrovic observed the following:

When the monk entered the office he had dark glasses in his hand, and when he went out he put them on his nose, although it was in the dead of night.

After the entrance of Russia into the War, the monks did not hide their eyes under dark glasses anymore. This leads one to believe that the monks were afraid of Russian intervention in favor of the persecuted Orthodox people, as long as Russian-German relations were good. They wanted to remain anonymous for that reason and escape eventual punishment. But with the entrance of Russia in the war against Germany, the monks lost their fear and took off their masks before the civilized world.[36]

At Rogolje, Branimir Zupancic, the curate, had 400 people massacred. Another curate, Eugen Gujic, from Busovaca, tried to stand up against the "schism" by assassinating the Serbian Orthodox priest, Djordje Skobic. The curate of Pukovo, Mijo Cuntic, set up the Ustashi police. At Grubisino Polje, the arrest of Serbs and their massacre were arranged by two priests, Peter Sivjanovic and Jakob Marjanovic.

The curate, Josip Beckmann terrorized the inhabitants of Sanski Most, not only as an Ustashi but also as an informer of the Gestapo.

Peter M. Stojin, a survivor of the Ustashi inferno, testifies to the part another priest played:

The priest, Ante Djuric, was named Chief of the Ustashi police, and presided at the mobile court for the district of Dvor na Uni. Having all the power in his own hands, he immediately dismissed all the former employees, and named others, from another locality. All our priests and teachers disappeared because their lives were in danger. The use of cyrillic lettering was forbidden and we were obliged to destroy the inscriptions on the tombs of our dead parents because they were written in cyrillic. We were forbidden to call ourselves Serbian Orthodox and yet we had always been known by that name. But they made us call our religion "Greek of oriental ritual." We had to wear the letter *P* on our sleeves and that gave them the right to mistreat or kill us. We were branded second class citizens.[37]

[36] Psunjski, *U ime Hrista—Svetinje u Plamenu.* (In the Name of Christ—Sanctities in Flames), Belgrade, 1944, p. 19.

[37] *Voice of Canadian Serbs,* April 4, 1957.

Mladen Ostojic, a Serbian Orthodox priest from Zirovac, accused the curate, Antun Djuric, of blackmailing the Serbs during the conversions and massacres, robbing them of sums amounting up to 50,000 kuna.[38]

Another testimony against Antun Djuric was given by Ilija Vranjesevic, the Serbian Orthodox priest:

> Before our escape, all Serbian government employees and their teachers received an order from priest Djuric to submit their petitions for conversion to Catholicism, or to leave their residences and posts. After they applied for conversion they were told confidentially to coerce all other Serbs to accept Catholicism or else to move wherever they could if they wanted to escape execution.
>
> In this manner, all heads of families were compelled to go to their local teacher, with a 10 dinar tax stamp, to make out a petition for conversion to Catholicism for themselves and their families.
>
> The Serbs, in the district of Dvor na Uni trembled with fear at the mention of the name of priest Djuric, who imprisoned the Serbs in his stable and barn where he tortured them with hunger and thrashing until they accepted Catholicism.[39]

Djuric then started a purging process: Vasa Mrkobrad, secretary of the Town Hall; Mladen Durman, receiver at the "Post, Telephone and Telegraph," Bogdan Smoljanovic, inspector of Forests and Water Works, and still others, were arrested on his orders, and died in atrocious agony, after having their arms and legs broken. But this ecclesiastic did not stop there; he also recruited and commanded assassins and torturers for the forced conversions of the Serbian Orthodox, or in case of refusal, their suppression. Such methods brought their reward, and the man who was responsible for them was decorated personally by Pavelic with the "Cross of Merit." [40]

Abbot Dionis Juricev, Head of the Religious Department, or, in other words, organizer of the mission, called out during a political meeting at Staza: "Today it is not considered a crime to kill a child of seven if he interferes with our Ustashi government."

The singular casuistry of this saintly man had been heard only too often.

Vlado Bilobrk, curate of Metkovic, in April 1941, with gun in hand, attacked a train of Yugoslav soldiers near the town of

[38] *Archives of the Refugee Commissariat,* Belgrade 1941, A. III, n°220.
[39] *Archives of the Refugee Commissariat,* Belgrade 1941, A. III, n°222.
[40] *Kartoteka Ureda za Odlikovanje Nezavisne Drzave Hrvatske,* cited in Novak, p. 277.

Gabela. He was the most influential organizer of Ustashi centers in the province of Neretva, and his collaborators were the Franciscans, Ciro Bubic, Mato Sinkovic, Martin Gudelj, Bozidar Simic, Peter Antic, and many others.

Obviously paradoxical as it may seem, among the disciples of the "Poverello" (who could have been considered the pure incarnation of evangelistic gentleness), were many of the top-ranking killers who had come in for their share of awards. Because of their loyalty to the Poglavnik and his Ustashi, and because of the active part they took in the organization of their criminal regime, they certainly deserve the praises of the Catholic Slovakian newspaper, the *Gardist,* which was an organ of the "Guard of Hlinka" (another pro-Hitlerian apostle), in an article entitled: "The Franciscans, First Fighters for Independence." [41] This was a promising start; and the frightful crimes of these religious officials soon filled the lists of the bloody chronicle of satellite Croatia. Viktor Novak, a Croatian professor at the University of Belgrade, testifies to this in his remarkable book:

> The terrible and overwhelming facts have been proved. Pavelic's Ustashi units were sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina to start a war of fratricide. In this region they discovered partisans and opinionated collaborators, a large number of whom were the sons of St. Francis. For sometime their monasteries had been used as centers for Nazi and Ustashi espionage, and arsenals for the militant prefects and functionaries.
>
> What is most deplorable during these troubled times is that the sons of St. Francis of Asissi have become, not only the ideological and moral collaborators of the terrorists but also active members and accomplices of such monstrous crimes. The pulpits of the churches have never been profaned in a more disgraceful and brutal manner as during this period in which we live. In the guise of fighting against atheistic Communism, the Church has become the vanguard of Ustashi and Nazi punishment raids, with the aim of biologically annihilating the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was from the pulpits of the churches that the Catholic population was incited to persecute the Serbs and the Moslems.[42]

The Franciscan, Berto Dragicevic of the Siroki Brijeg monastery, commanded the Ustashi militia of the region, and the Franciscans, Ante Cvitkovic and Andrija Jelicic, helped him in his terrorist attacks. Dragicevic was decorated with the "Iron Leaf, IVth degree."

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[41] *Gardist* (Bratislava), August 1941.
[42] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, pp. 637-638.

It was the Franciscan, Grga Blazevic, who organized the massacres at Bosanski Novi.

The Franciscan, Zvonko Brekalo, officer at the concentration camp at Jasenovac, took part against the resistance. His colleague, Miroslav Buzuk, was in the espionage service for Italian and Ustashi authorities at Sanski Most.

Ante Klaric, and the Ustashi commander at Tramosnjica, cried out vociferously, during one of his sermons in 1941: "You are old women and you should put on skirts for you have not yet killed a single Serb. We have no weapons nor knives and we must forge them out of old scythes and sickles so that you can cut the throats of Serbs whenever you see them." [43]

Risto Jovanovic, who escaped from the killings, gave the following report at Belgrade in 1941:

> All the crimes and all these pillages have been carried on by the Ustashi under the Commander's orders, and that Commander is the Franciscan, Ante Klaric, curate at Tramosnjica. The Ustashi tortured the people before his very eyes. He was seen putting all the sacred objects revered by the Orthodox Serbian in a most humiliating corner of his home. The Franciscan, Peter Berkovic, at Drnis, and the curate Janko Herakovic, organized the Ustashi militia. They imprisoned the Serbian Orthodox priest, Jovo Andric, from the region of Tepljuk, and the monk, Sevastijan Jovic, from Drnis, and tortured both these ecclesiastics.[44]

The Franciscan, Augustino Cievolo from the Monastery of St. Francis at Split, went through the streets with a "colt" strapped to his shoulder, begging the peasants to massacre the Orthodox. Another, Otto Knezovic, one of Pavelic's spirited partisans, incited his leader to found a dynasty and said he would act as tutor for his eldest son, the "Dauphin."

At Capljina, the Franciscan, Tugomir Soldo, organized the massacres. Above named Franciscan, Peter Berkovic, clothed in the robes of his order, carried a gun over his shoulder and conducted the killing of the Serbs, at Knin, where numerous Orthodox were found slaughtered in their beds.

This horrible litany could be indefinitely prolonged, but the previous enumeration suffices in showing the preponderant role these men of God played in the extermination of a people. No sanctions, no blame, and not even a call to order was given to disturb the "work" of the assassins.

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[43] Herve Laurier, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[44] *Archives of Refugee Commissariat*, Belgrade, D.LXVIII n°3789.

Today it is evident that no Christian of modern times, wearing clerical robes the world over, would speak and behave as did Stepinac's priests in Pavelic's pagan state, which was considered as a good Catholic state.

This was an entirely new phase which the Croatian Catholic Church introduced to Christianity in 1941. It was indeed new and strange, as strange as priests in clerical robes suddenly appearing in Ustashi uniforms complete with insignias and war decorations, though the wearers had never taken part in the war, but in the massacre of the helpless innocent.

Nothing of course, could be expected of His Grace Stepinac, and His Grace Saric, the "poet," nor from anyone in their episcopacy. But the "apostolic visitor" Marcone, the representative sent directly by His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, was there on the spot witnessing the tortures of these fanatics without even uttering a word.

It is important to note the apparent fact that during the four years' reign of bloody Ustashi terror, the massacres were decreased several times. It seemed that the Ustashi were tired and fed up with their criminal atrocities. But the government was always on the alert and prepared to lift up the morale of the faithful Ustashi when it became low. It is also very important to note that the initiative for the massacres of Serbs, Jews or Gypsies never came from the Croatian common people. It always came from government and Ustashi leaders, big or small, in uniform or in priests (monks) robes.

In promoting its proselytism through force, side by side with the Ustashi, the Croat Catholic Church bears an enormous historical responsibility in the question of the conversion of Orthodox Serbs, and has revealed its tactics for attaining the unification of the Eastern and Western Churches, to which the Serbs and Croats respectively belong. By spreading religious hatred and national animosity among the Serbs and Croats, the Croat Catholic clergy deepened the fratricidal war in Yugoslavia, and acted systematically in favor of the Axis and its satellites, the occupiers of Yugoslavia. By such means the Croat Catholic clergy consciously and by its own free will chose the camp of the enemies of the Yugoslav state as their allies.

PERSECUTIONS OF THE JEWS

The persecution of the Jews at Sarajevo began at the end of June 1941, but the first steps for mass internment took place on

September 4th, during the night. A thousand people—men, women, and children—had to make preparations to leave in seven minutes before being taken to the concentration camp of Kriscice, by order of Jure Francetic, commander of the "Black Legion," who had originated this convenient solution to provide enough beds for his executioners. For, of course, like their comrades in other specialized divisions, they needed to save their strength for accomplishing a duty that did not even make them balk. At Vlasenica, for instance, they imprisoned all the Jews, and at Ploce, led their wives and daughters away to be raped and then slaughtered.

At Bugojno, on August 2, 1941, the Jews, accompanied by the Serbs, were hauled away in trucks and taken to Cracanica. Once there, on the edge of a deep crevice where 1,900 Serbians lay dying in agony, they were massacred and hurled into space. A similar act occurred on the banks of the Sava where 340 Jews, whom the Chief of Police from Brcko, Veceslav Montani, wished to "liquidate," were taken one snowy night to the bridge. Their clothes were torn off, their throats cut, and their brains bashed in with hammers. At Podromanija, an Ustashi named Longo, a butcher by profession, took charge of the work. The "Volksdeutcher" in their province collaborated with the Ustashi.

All Jews who were not massacred were sent to concentration camps, terrible infernos quite like their Nazi models, as will be seen further on. However, all these trucks failed to reach their destinations; the drivers sometimes decided that it was simpler to slaughter the human beast on the way.

In many localities the synagogues met with the same fate as the Serbian Orthodox churches. They were pillaged and then burned by the Ustashi Volksdeutcher at Osijek, Djakovo, Zemun, Sremska Mitrovica, Slavonska Pozega, Nova Gradiska, and in many other regions. Not even the Jewish cemeteries escaped the ghouls.

Finally, as a logical sequence of this violence, a decree-law (No. CCCXXXVI-1699-Z-p. 1941) was issued October 9, 1941, declaring the nationalization of Israelite enterprizes and possessions.

Article I of this decree-law stipulated:

"The State Direction for reconstruction is authorized, in view of reconstruction and national economy, to nationalize all Jewish enterprizes and possessions whatsoever (with or without paying an indemnity) for the benefit of the Independent State of Croatia, or for the benefit of the State Direction for reconstruction.

"The State Direction for Reconstruction can decide and judge the value of nationalized Jewish enterprizes and Jewish possessions, as well as the obligation of paying an indemnity, the amount of the sum, and the method of payment. No appeal concerning this decision may be taken before the Administrative Court." [45]

The imprisonments and internments started "en masse" at the end of June 1941, and continued during the following months all through the year of 1942, at the end of which practically no Jews were left in satellite Croatia except those who had not yet succumbed to the diabolical regime of the extermination camps.

The results were estimated by a German, Franz Riedel, who gave his impressions of Croatia in an article entitled: "Coming to Terms with the Balkan Spirit and with the Jews," which appeared in the *Berliner Boersenzeitung:* "Another change which strikes the foreigner almost immediately—the Jewish colors have disappeared from Zagreb. There are no more Jews in town. Previously there had been about 9,000, and in the principal streets they owned most of the shops. Meeting a man or a woman wearing the yellow insignia is now very rare. The Jews who were very powerful, economically speaking, have been done away with in Zagreb with lightning speed. The synagogue, of moorish style, which lent such a foreign note and which one passed on entering the city, is completely gone."

The Ustashi Government issued a circular No. 46468/1941 of July 30, 1941, which concerned the conversion of Orthodox people to Catholicism, but there was also a special clause concerning the Jews, which read: "The Government is acquainted with the fact that numerous Jewish people are presenting themselves for conversion to Catholicism, but the conversion to Catholicism has no connection with these people because of their status in relation to the existing law on non-Arians." (Legal clause on Origin of Races of April 30, 1941).

This circular issued by the Ustashi Government, was made public at once by Archbishop Stepinac (and was signed by him personally) under No. 11.530 of August 1941, and was sent to the clergy with the following instructions: "The following circular is forwarded to the soul-saving clergy in order that they may be informed regarding all those who are to be converted. Beside being in possession of the document or release from the

[45] *Narodne Novine,* October 10, 1941.

Greek-Eastern Church, each person must have a document from the District or Police Authorities as to the honesty of his character. You are referred once more to the Circular of July 11, 1941, No. 7726, i.e. specifically point 4 of this Circular, for instructions concerning the indoctrination of the converts."

ATROCITIES IN THE VOJVODINA REGION UNDER THE HUNGARIAN OCCUPATION

In occupied Serbia, the Germans took charge of "liquidating" the Jews, and only a few of them succeeded in hiding in people's homes for the duration of the war.

To the north of Belgrade, the province of Backa was occupied by Hungary, whose army and gendarmery immediately began germanizing and magyarizing the Serbian and Jewish regions. The German and Hungarian minorities took part in this patriotic work, which resulted in scenes of frightful savagery. On January 7, 1942, at Curug, Serbs and Jews were piled into the primary school and into a few large stores, and there they were machine-gunned by soldiers and police, and their bodies thrown into the Danube and the Tisa. On a block of ice which bordered the river bank could be seen one of the executioners, whose name will never be forgotten, Elek Kovacs, who was sawing up the nude bodies of women.

In the village of Zablje, the massacre lasted from January 4th to the 9th. The prisoners, bound with wire, were taken in trucks to the banks of the Tisa, where they were shot and thrown into the river.

On the 10th of January an engagement was undertaken in the town of Titel. At Stari Becej, individual executions began on the same day, followed by a general killing on January 26, 27, and 28th, by the order of Colonel Deak, commanding the 9th regiment of infantry. The victims were searched and their stores, shops and apartments pillaged, and turned over to be used by the Hungarians and Germans.

But it was at Novi Sad that the massacres were the most numerous. General Feket Halmy Czeidner, commanding the 5th army of Segedin, mobilized a special unit under the orders of Col. Jossef Grassy. This commando of killers, backed up by the constabulary and Hungarian civilians, exterminated about 1,300 Serbs and Jews from the 21st to the 23rd of January. The houses, streets, and even the cemeteries of the town were searched, at a

temperature of thirty below zero. Men, women and children, and mothers with nursing babies were taken to the Strand (the beach) where they were machine-gunned and thrown, some still with a breath of life, into the frozen river. There were two Catholics among them, the Lawyer Pavlas and his wife, originally from Slovakia, who, as friends of the Serbs, were also martyred.

A Croatian officer who was there on the spot used a stop-watch to time the killing. This arbitrary amateur, his calculations once jotted down, announced that such a fine performance of "liquidation" had been done at the rate of 15 persons a minute.

Such a sportive event ended in various awards to the different initiators, either decorations or promotions to a higher rank. By a decree of Regent Horthy, Colonel Jossef Grassy was promoted to General, and his assistant, Gunda, was made a Colonel, along with Zoltan Czakas, commander of the 16th battalion of Frontier guardsmen, who had lent a hand in the slaughter.

The President of the Hungarian Council, Miklos Kallay, in response to indignant protests from abroad, revindicated his responsibility in the massacres. Nevertheless, he was admitted "persona grata" to the United States where he has become an influential member of the Free Europe Committee in New York, as well as the national Hungarian Committee in exile. As for Regent Horthy, everyone knows that he spent his last days quite peacefully in the attractive summer resort of Estoril, in Portugal. It is doubtful that the memory of 35,000 victims ever troubled the remainder of these benevolent men.

But, in revenge, a Hungarian deputy, Bajczi Zsilinsky, indignant because of the part his country's army had played, was fearless enough to send a letter to Horthy, in which he stigmatized these crimes "as leaving a mark of shame on Magyar culture."

PAVELIC INCITES THE MOSLEMS TO RISE UP AGAINST THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX

But let us again now turn to Croatia. In order to succeed in his gigantic enterprises of "cleansing by making more room," the Poglavnik was obliged to assure himself of every possible co-operation, especially in the regions where the Serbian masses were more densely settled. As has been said, in spite of the tremendous government propaganda, and the repeated appeals to commit murder, uttered also from the pulpits of the churches,

the Catholic Croatian peasants, as a whole, gave little response to this program of assassinating the Orthodox Serbs.

But in Bosnia-Herzegovina, occupied by Ustashi, lived the Moslem minority, of which a small part was oriented as Croatian nationalists, and represented moreover, in the Ustashi government by Osman Kulenovic, who was vice-president, and his brother Dzafer, former Yugoslav minister. Pavelic understood perfectly the advantages he could draw for this situation: by winning over the greatest possible number of Moslems, and making them fight against the Orthodox Serbs, he would succeed in a double victory. The two camps, in a ruthless war, would end by exterminating each other and thus pave the way to the total "catholicization" and "croatization" of the entire province.

In order to carry out this machiavellian plan, he resorted to corruption, promising high positions in the administration and a project that would make the agrarian reform more flexible, by favoring the big feudal landowners. This bait brought the desired results and assured Pavelic of the co-operation of a part of the Moslems, above all those in Eastern Bosnia. With the help of the Great Muphti of Jerusalem, Amin el Husseini, a ferocious pro-Hitlerite, the "Bosnian Division" and the "Handzar Division" (Dagger Division) were formed, copied after the Ustashi specialized divisions. Simultaneously they spread terror in the Orthodox regions, pillaging, raping and massacring.

Dzafer Kulenovic, heir of his brother Osman, as vice-president of the Ustashi government, was especially conscientious, and was responsible for his native town being bathed in bloodshed. The massacre of the Jews on the railroad bridge above the Sava River has already been referred to. Numerous Serbs also met their death here. It was still again by Kulenovic's orders that the Serbian Orthodox church at Brcko was destroyed, its cemetery dug up, and the bones dispersed.

In the districts of Rogatica, Vlasenica, Srebrnica and Visegrad, numerous massacres of Serbian Orthodox were conducted by Moslems. But the Serbs in the region, in order to defend themselves against these specialized divisions, formed groups of "Chetniks" which, in turn, demanded reprisals of the Moslem population in the districts of Cajnice, Plevlje and Foca. Thus the blood of innocent victims was shed on both sides, just as the Ustashi government had counted on, and with reprisals following reprisals, the Serbian Orthodox and Moslem elements destroyed each other for the great benefit of Catholic colonization.

According to the Ustashi decree of May 31, 1941, the Serbian Orthodox could, in principle, be converted, according to their choice, to Roman Catholicism or Catholicism of the oriental ritual, or to the reformed religion or that of Islam. But in practice it was quite a difference thing. By proselytising, the Roman church expected to be the only beneficiary of the tragic situation which faced the Serbian Orthodox. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Catholic clergy, above all, would not tolerate the conversion either of the Orthodox or the Jews to Islamism, although some of them would have willingly embraced this religion. In spite of the apparently friendly attitude of the government in regard to the Moslems, the Ustashi, who were the faithful servants of Catholic expansion in the Balkans, did not hesitate massacring (at Travnik, for instance, or at Bogovo Brdo in the province of Kordun) the Serbian Orthodox who preferred turning toward Mecca rather than toward their ever implacable enemy, Rome. Consequently, at Budozelj, in the district of Visoko, the Imam's life was threatened if he accepted new requests for conversion.

The Catholic clergy, as during the Austro-Hungarian rule, did not despair of bringing the Mohammedan population within the pale of the Roman church. At Catici, in the Visoko area, the Catholics declared openly: "Equality of treatment for the Moslems is just temporary. Some day we shall forbid the bowing of the marhaba." The curate of Sijekovac, in the Derventa quarter, advised Moslem children to learn the catechism "because," so he said, "in the near future Moslems would be obliged to embrace the Roman Catholic religion."

A Franciscan, Silvije Frankovic of Bugojno, a cruel missionary and a great friend of the Ustashi of the region, did not seem at all embarrassed when he said: "It is a pity that we did not take care of the Moslems first, and then the Serbs."

Another Franciscan, Bozidar Bralo, whom Pavelic had made Prefect of Eastern Bosnia, cried out during a secret conference at Visoko: "After the Serbs it's the turn of the Moslems." The chief of police at Kupres corroborated this aim in the same phraseology, without beating around the bush, while speaking before his future victims. The latter, morever, were just beginning to understand. From October 12, 1941, the Moslems of Sarajevo condemned those of their religion who were siding with the Ustashi, in the following resolution: "We denounce all Moslems who have committed acts of extortion and violence. Such crimes

are only associated with degenerates and liars. This said, we declare that they did not act on their own initiative except after receiving arms, uniforms, instructions and often, orders."

The forced conversions of the Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism showed the Moslems clearly what was in store for them. They understood, in effect, that the political aims of the "Independent State of Croatia" in Bosnia-Herzegovina was the creation of a strong Catholic majority which would soon endeavor to treat believers in their own way and to divide them from their co-religionists in the Balkans and the Middle East.

Moslems in several towns in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Tuzla, Prijedor, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Bihac, etc.) stood against the Serbian persecution. Those of Banja Luka, on November 12, 1941, said:

> From the beginning of the formation of the Independent State of Croatia we, Moslems, declare, with the greatest sorrow, that the Ustashi and other irresponsible factors commit the most brutal faults and crimes. The most elementary rights of man have been unscrupulously violated. The security of goods and lives, the liberty of religious beliefs and thought, have no longer any value for a great majority of the people in these regions.
>
> The killing of priests and many notable people without preliminary trial, the massacre and the torture of numerous innocent Serbian Orthodox men, women and children, the massive expulsion (without notice) from their homes of numerous families and their deportation into unknown lands—are the acts which have shocked every honest man and profoundly moved the Moslems of our country.
>
> We have never expected, and have still less desired, to see such methods used by the government in our countries. During all our troubled history we have never used like methods, and not only because Islam forbade us, but more because we have believed, and still believe, that these methods lead directly to destruction of public order in each state, and constitute a menace to its very existence. We consider that oppression ought not to exist even against the worst enemy, and what happens here cannot be found in the history of any other people in the world.
>
> The results of such a policy, if one can call such methods political, are frightful; religious tolerance which once existed in Bosnia-Herzegovina has disappeared. The injuries and the provocations caused by the Catholics often take such a turn even toward the Moslems that they have led us to consider them seriously. The relations between the two factions of our people are in the process of being entirely destroyed.
>
> A part of the Croatian Catholic clergy considers that its hour has come and exploit it unscrupulously. Propaganda in favor of Catholicism has developed to such a point that it brings us back to the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Under its force, and due to the tolerance

of its official organs, the conversions to Catholicism are practiced in mass groups. Thus people who until then have been deprived of their civil rights become citizens and authentic Croats through their conversion.

The equality of Islam is very often put in a doubtful position in the writings and in the innumerable statements from the supreme authorities. The conversion to Islamism (in favor of which we have never made any propaganda) has in practice never assured an effective security, as has Catholicism. Many Orthodox intellectuals have paid with their lives for such an attempt, as was the case at Travnik. One often hears from the Catholic songs, offensive to Moslems, warnings that the same fate is reserved for us as for the Orthodox Serbs.

A part of the Ustashi militia, not only irregulars but official members, have committed acts both against the Orthodox and the Moslems, causing us great dismay.

The uprising which took place in our lands, spreading further and further, is the result of these crimes and these excesses. The result itself bore all the characteristics, the consequences and the horror of civil war. The position of the Moslems in Bosnia-Herzegovina has never been so precarious and it is not exaggerated to say that the Moslems in these regions, during their history, have never lived in such painful times.

The Moslems are the principal victims of the governmental acts which forced the Serbs to become guerrilas. Because the Moslems are mixed with Orthodox Christians in these districts, the Orthodox Serbs, in their great distress, attacked in a thoughtless fashion their nearest neighbors, the Moslems.

In the midst of these troubles, it was the peaceful, innocent citizens who suffered most. Villages were burned and their inhabitants obliged to flee and take refuge in the large towns. Thousands of orphans asked for help. We believe that the patriots did not deserve to undergo such sacrifices and to be thrown into a general chaos which spread more and more and lead the Moslems in Bosnia-Herzegovina to total destruction.

In spite of the daily demands made from all parts to put an end to this state of affairs, and in spite of the reassuring statements from competent authorities, the situation did not get better but worse, and even menaced the regions which had not until now been directly hit by these misfortunes. What is even worse is that certain authorities took measures which provoked even stronger reactions from the Serbs. These reactions naturally resulted in worse sufferings for the unprotected population. All this obliges us to reflect and give good reasons for believing that it was a system practiced by the authorities with premeditation. In fact it was a well defined plan.

A number of Catholics consciously threw onto the Moslems the responsibility for all these troubles, making them believe that all these tragic happenings were the result of a settling of accounts between Moslems and Orthodox. We know of numerous cases where the Ustashi have massacred and tortured, disguised as Moslems and wearing the fez. This took place in Bosanski Novi, where the Ustashi arrived one day in four trucks, all wearing the fez, and there they

joined the Moslem delinquents who were massacring the Orthodox. The same thing happened in Bosanska Kostajnica, where in one single day about 862 Orthodox were strangled. In Kulen Vakuf, where Miroslav Matijevic from Vrtoce showed special zeal, 950 Orthodox were massacred, which provoked a reaction amongst the Serbian "Chetniks" who on August 6 set fire to the town, causing the loss of 1,350 Moslems. We know of cases of attacks on the Orthodox by Catholic Ustashi, disguising themselves as Moslems. We know, too, of cases in which the Orthodox were made to believe that they were exterminated by the Moslems. If we wished to convert or massacre the Serbs and others, we could have done so more easily several centuries earlier when we were infinitely more powerful. Then we could have justified such means better than we can today.

The Ustashi, having provoked a serious conflict between the Moslems and the Orthdox Serbs caused us Moslems to mobilize as soldiers to suppress the uprising by killing the (Orthodox) Serbs. The Serbs then killed the Moslems, and thus exterminated each other without knowing how it would end or what the consequences would be.[46]

Beside these protests, the political and religious leaders of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Moslems were carrying out secret negotiations with Gen. Milan Nedic, President of the Serbian Government, in Belgrade, to have a group of political Moslem representatives transferred to Serbia, from where they could carry out a struggle against the Ustashi occupation of Bosnia-Hercegovina. They also asked Berlin for the annexation of this region to Serbia, with the aim of pacifying it and preventing further Ustashi crimes.

Unfortunately the Ustashi circles in Zagreb learned of this maneuvre and through their connections in Berlin prevented its realization.

This is only one reflection, among thousands, representing the general indignation aroused by the Ustashi crimes. Even in Croatia, although the reign of terror hindered any manifestation of real feeling, the greater part of the population, from the bottom of its heart, hated Pavelic and his band of traitors. Great numbers of Croatians remained loyal to the Yugoslav state. Proof of this was shown in the reaction of the crowds on certain occasions. During the war, convoys of Yugoslav officers who had joined the underground and who were captured by the Germans, were led through the railway stations bordering the road to Germany where they were interned as prisoners of war. Rumors

[46] Memorandum of the Yugoslav Moslem Organization on crimes of Genocide committed by the Croatian Ustashi during the World War II, Paris, addressed to the United Nations 1951.

immediately spread throughout the town and women, young girls and children rushed to take them food, bouquets of flowers and small offerings as a token of encouragement and admiration. These touching scenes took place from Belgrade all the way across Croatia and Slovenia. Signs like that at such a time were all the more significant.

Abroad, in the whole free world, there was a general hue and cry. Unanimous replies of indignation and disgust accused these killers, whom Ivan Subasic, the former "ban" of Croatia and member of the Yugoslav government-in-exile, publicly repudiated, in the name of his compatriots.

"As 'ban,' I take up the defense of my Croatia and the Croatian people and refuse to accept any attempt of generalization and accusation for the so-called brutalities committed by Croatians." [47]

Dr. Juraj Krnjevic, vice-president of the Yugoslav Government, in his discourse at Cambridge, for the opening of Anglo-Yugoslav week, March 3, 1942, refuted the demands of the Croatian separatists in these terms: "We Croats are the sincere partisans of a community which includes our brother Slavs, the Slovenes and the Serbs. The idea of union was given birth among the Croats 125 years ago. It was the direct consequence of the German and Italian menace which increased from day to day. We are convinced that a Yugoslavia organized on a democratic basis, with an effective equality, is an absolute necessity for the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes." [48]

But later Krnjevic changed his mind. Today he is fighting for an Independent Croatia, with the "frontier on the Drina river," just as Ustashi did.

Even in Italy, certain papers could not conceal their disgust. The *Gazetta del Popolo* of Turin (October, 1941) wrote: "It would be ridiculous to deny that the acting powers-that-be in Croatia are not the former terrorists. These criminals have become Generals, Ministers, Ambassadors, newspaper editors and Chief of Police. In spite of the promotions to higher rank, they have not changed fundamentally. In fact they are exactly what they used to be, including Pavelic and the members of his government."

In Bologna on September 18, 1941, the Italian correspondent

[47] Speech at Pittsburg, October 16, 1941 (cited in *Americki Hrvatski Glasnik,* (Chicago) May 11 and 18, 1955).

[48] *Sluzbene Novine* (Official Journal of Jugoslav Government), London, April 30, 1942.

Corrado Zoli published in the newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino,* his conversation with a German major regarding the Ustashi crimes, carried out under the auspices of the Catholics, the major said the following:

> There were special bands who performed the massacres, and are probably still doing so, actually led and incited by Catholic priests and monks. This is more than confirmed. There was a monk near Travnik with the crucifix in one hand who was inciting a band of people whom he had organized and was leading. This happened in the first days after my arrival there.
>
> "This, therefore, means the renewal of medieval times," remarked the correspondent.
>
> "Yes, but made worse by machine guns, hand grenades, dynamite, barrels of gasoline and other means of terrorism."
>
> "Was this committed by the local Croat people?" asked Zoli.
>
> "That's it, but by the worst element of the Croat population, just young men of around 20, collected, armed and led by Croats who came from Zagreb. This was all taking place among people who pretend to be civilized and who brag about having accepted the Mediterranean and Roman culture, sometime even stating that they are direct descendants of the Goths. It was a terrible massacre! It was a living terror! Entire families, men, women, babies, old men, the sick and children were massacred and tormented by the worst imaginable Chinese tortures, which cannot even be dreamed of."

Chapter VI

The Death Camps

AT THE TIME that the Italian paper printed this unflattering appreciation of Pavelic and his acolytes, the Independent State of Croatia had just finished the first semester of its existence, and this quasi-anniversary was officially celebrated at Zagreb. For this occasion the Croat press was even more eloquent in its daily praise of Pavelic and, of course, the Catholic publications were just as prompt in extolling the regime of bloodshed. In Archbishop Ivan Saric's *Nedelja* (October 12, 1941) there was a large picture of the national hero, accompanied by a dithyrambic article. In the *Andjeo Cuvar* (October 1941) the virile face of Marshall Slavko Kvaternik was honored on the front page as if veiled with incense and benedictions.

However, there was another side to the story. These fatuous anniversaries coincided with the last raids on the Jews at Sarajevo. Caught in their homes or on the street, they were sent off to the concentration camps at Jasenovac. November 15th and 16th were, above all, dark days for the Jews in Bosnia.[1] These camps, which had been officially set up by decree-law (No. 1528-2101-Z-1941, September 25, 1941),[2] were destined to become as time went on, the Ustashi's principal instrument of extermination. As they began losing control of the mountainous regions, which the resistance forces had reconquered, Pavelic decreed that for any attack against an Ustashi ten people would be selected by the police and executed in reprisal, without any legal proceedings whatsoever. From that time on, each day witnessed the execution of hostages. At Ruma, for instance (August 14, 1942), ninety people were killed; sixty on August 19, 1942, at Sremska Mitrovica; 140 on August 25, 1942, at Vukovar—and so on without end. But soon the punishment-raids in the Serbian villages did not dare venture into certain regions without the support of the German army. And this army had quite enough to do for its own sake and could not spare the necessary units for helping the Poglavnik.

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[1] Approximately 8,600 Jews from Bosnia were imprisoned in these camps as of August, 1942.
[2] *Narodne Novine*, November 26, 1941.

Instead of "liquidating" a sufficient number of Orthodox Serbs on the spot, according to a preconceived plan, the government concentrated all its effort on the concentration camps, which became veritable slaughterhouses for those who were interned there for the slightest motive. By orders of the Croatian Himmler, Andrija Artukovic, Minister of the Interior, a new regulation (CCIx-1779-Z-1942) affected the concentration camps and stipulated: "Members of the family of people who have interfered with public order and security, singly or in armed groups, and who have threatened the peace and calm of the Croatian people, or who have undertaken to perpetrate any infraction against the State with violence, or against individuals and their possessions, as well as members of the family of persons who have disappeared from their homes, will be sent for a forced residence to a concentration camp. The Minister of the Interior (Office of Public Order and Security) has been authorized to set up camps in various regions of the Independent State of Croatia."

As can be seen, practically anyone related to a guerrilla could be sent to one of these camps. No proof of wrong-doing was necessary.

Paragraph 2 emphasizes:

"The Minister of the Interior (Office of Public Order and Security) will decide on the forced confinement in a concentration camp of these family members, as well as on the length of their confinements in the camps."

Article 7 states that:

"All household and other possessions belonging to certain members of the family of persons defined by Article I, can be confiscated for the benefit of the Independent State of Croatia."

"The Minister of the Interior (Office of Public Order and Security) is authorized to decide on the confiscation of possessions belonging to any member of the family of such persons."

Article 13 stated:

"No appeal to an administrative court with the view to altering the decisions made by virtue of this actual decree-law, will be allowed." [3]

From this date, the camps began to multiply in satellite Croatia. They could be found at Jasenovac, Jadovno, Pag, Ogulin, Jastrebarsko, Koprivnica, Krapje, Zenica, Stara Gradiska, Djakovo, Lobograd, Tenje, Danica at Osijek, etc. They were

[3] The above quotes are from *Narodne Novine*, July 22, 1942.

directed by Vjekoslav Lubric, right hand man of Andrija Artukovic. This strange character, under the name of Max Luburic, is now living peacefully in Spain.

"The way it functioned was extremely simple. The prisoners were divided into three categories: those who were without papers were immediately liquidated (as the director of the Jasenovac camp has testified); those who had permits to remain three years were liquidated in several days; and then there were those who had special permits who were locked up for six years and liquidated in more attenuated circumstances." [4]

In the autumn of 1941, frightful hecatombs took place in the camps Jadovno, Pag, Krapje and Danica. About 4,500 Serbs and 2,400 Jews had been interned on the Isle of Pag. Every morning the executioner called several dozens out in a neighboring field and chopped them down with an axe. When the Ustashi learned that the Italians were going to occupy the Isle, they massacred the prisoners "en masse," about 4,500. The Italians found only mountains of bodies on their arrival.

Hunger, cold and epidemics decimated those who were still interned, thus completing the executioners' job. These killers seemed to relish their work, and all their exploits rapidly gave these frightful infernos the renown that Pavelic needed to maintain his reign of terror.

At the Gracac camp a living Serbian surgeon, Dr. Veljko Torbica, was cut up, and salt poured over his open wounds, while his assassins kept inquiring: "Has the operation been successful, doctor?"

Dr. Novacan who had fled from Belgrade to Istanbul in June, 1942, gave the Yugoslav Royal Legation the following information regarding Ustashi crimes: "Since the ice melted on the Danube and Sava Rivers, the bodies of massacred Serbs have been reaching Belgrade, and each day 10 to 100 bodies were pulled out of the water for burial. The mutilated bodies looked dreadful: women and girls with breasts cut off. Most of the bodies were inscribed 'Direction-Serbia'. In an empty mattress little children, tied up and thrown in the water, were found dead. . . ."

To give a little variety, noses and ears were cut off, and eyes were scratched out. The Italians photographed an Ustashi wearing two chains of human tongues and eyes around his neck.

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[4] Jean-Marc Sabathier in the Magazine *Paris-Match*, May 25, 1957, p. 23.

Below is the testimony of the Italian writer, Curzio Malaparte, who interviewed Pavelic at Zagreb:

"While he talked," wrote Malaparte, "I kept looking at a wicker basket placed to the right of the Poglavnik on his desk. The lid was raised and in the basket was a variety of seafood, or so it seemed."

"Oysters from Dalmatia?" I inquired.

"Ante Pavelic raised the lid of the basket and showing me the seafood that looked like a mass of sticky, gelatinous oysters, he said with a tired, kindly smile: 'A gift from my loyal Ustashi! Forty pounds of human eyes!' "[5]

Madame Ruza Rupcic, a professor, has given this moving testimony of the camp at Bosanska Gradiska:

> While I was in the camp, above all from the month of May to the end of 1942, the Ustashi admitted a large number of convoys filled with women and children. As the convoys came in, mothers were separated from their children and sent to hard labor in Germany. Those who were not able to do the work were massacred immediately.
>
> The food and treatment of the children was indescribable. Their meals consisted of corn mush and water which rapidly brought on dysentery. The children died in large numbers.
>
> They had to sleep on the ground without mattresses or even straw and soon perished with the cold.
>
> In the month of July the Ustashi assembled 2,000 children under the pretext that they were ill. They were closed, by turn, in a room and poisoned with cyanide.[6]

In 1942, the Ustashi brought about 1,200 children from the provinces of Banija, Kordun and other regions to the concentration camp of Jastrebarsko. The Ustashi and the Sisters treated these children with indescribable brutality. Because of the lack of care and the famine, 486 children died shortly afterwards. Some of them were later rescued.

The concentration camp of Zemun was described as follows by a witness who managed to survive this inferno:

> It was composed of eight huts built in a row. From the straw on the ground, where the victims slept, drifted a terrible stench of decomposition. Several hundred prisoners filled each hut. Many of the sick and dying cried out in pain and agony, and in despair. In a far corner a child could be heard crying for its mother.

[5] Curzio Malaparte: *Kaputt* (Paris Ed. Denoel), p. 322 (1946).

[6] *Zlocini fasistickih okupatora i njihovih pomagaca protiv Jevreja u Jugoslaviji* (The crimes of the Fascist occupying forces and their acolytes against the Jews of Yugoslavia), published by Jewish Community (Belgrade, 1952), p. 109.

In another corner there was an unforgettable scene. A mother who was hardly more than a skeleton kept holding her child to her breast. Dressed in rags, she was trembling with cold and fear. The light in her eyes was fading and she tried to say a few words, probably a prayer for herself and her baby.

To a German officer who visited the camp, an Ustashi explained: "These Serbs we picked up in the village of Kordun and in western Bosnia. We burned their houses and brought them here to spend their last days at the entrance to Belgrade and Serbia. There were about 70,000 but there are only 20,000 left. They are dying by the hundreds and we trust the camp will soon be empty, so there will be room for the others. Those who do not die quickly enough we'll finish off by bashing them over the head. We Ustashi are more practical than you Germans. You shoot, but we use hammers, clubs, rope, fire and quick lime. It's less expensive."

"But what do you feed them?" asked the German. "Tea made with herbs and two potatoes once a day. It's the regulation diet," said the Ustashi with a kindly smile.[7]

Here also is the testimony of Madame Pauline Weiss, an English Jewess who was interned first at Jasenovac and then at Stara Gradiska:

During my captivity in the camp there were tortures every day and massive "liquidation." One day a wagon full of women and children from Sarajevo arrived. On opening the wagon, there were only dead bodies.

I even saw mounts of people who had been slaughtered and mutilated.

On December 22 I was sent to a women's camp at Stara Gradiska. There, I spent seven months in the "Kula." The wives of the executioners were Mara Budjon, a young woman called Milka 22 years old, a certain Bojane of 16, and Nada Luburic (sister of Vjekoslav-Maks Luburic). Every night they slaughtered and strangled the prisoners, and must have done away with at least 2,000 Serbian and Jewish women.[8]

In the camp at Jadovno approx. 10,000 people were killed. In speaking of this camp, a witness, Slavko Radaj said: "Prisoners were bound to each other by wire and taken to the edge of a crevice. The first one was given a push and his weight dragged the others down. Then the Ustashi threw hand grenades on top of them. The inhabitants said that for several days their cries of agony could still be heard." [9]

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[7] Djordje Sarapa, *Drugi Svetski rat i treca seoba naroda* (The second World War and the third emigration), *American Srbobran,* Pittsburgh, P., Vol. XLVII, n°10,799, February 9, 1953.

[8] *Zlocini fasistickih okupatora i njihovih pomagaca protiv Jevreja u Jugoslaviji,* p. 107.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 60.

George Bilainkin, an English writer who was visiting in Yugoslavia, was able to gather important testimonies and authentic documents on the terror that reigned in satellite Croatia:

> I have seen irrefutable evidence of the reign of terror by Pavelic and his Nazi friends. . . . I have heard confessions in court, by simple peasants, of the infamous deeds that went on daily during the early terror. I have listened to the principal perpetrators describing in their cells the gruesome events that failed sufficiently to terrorize the land throughout 1941 and later. . . . As I listened, during a violent storm at night, to one of Croatia's self-confessed masters of wholesale murder, Ljubo Milos, one-time Governor of Jasenovac prison,, I, too, shuddered. He explained, in his condemned cell in Zagreb, late in 1948, that the daily killing of three or four thousand arrivals was not a matter for arousing the conscience. Men, women, and children, as well as infants had to die because my senior officer ordered it. I showed the assistants the method. And after a time the destruction made no impression. I became used to it. If the reader be surprised at the date of the conversation with Milos—when he explained how special knives were invented in 1941, for the faster despatch of male Orthodox Greeks, how hammers were utilized for speedier murder of men and women, how people were shot more expeditiously, how his agents walked over babies to kill them by crushing their limbs—the reason is not easy to give.[10]

The camp at Jasenovac was the most important and the one which leaves the most terrifying memory of such infernos. Organized like infamous Belsen, this macabre camp, was composed of wooden huts, built on piles because of the dampness of the ground near the Sava River. Famine and massacres added to this unsanitary location, resulting in the rapid extermination of all the unfortunate victims who were interned there. It is estimated that a total of about 200,000 people met their death during 1941-1942. Crowds of Jewish children were burned alive in the old brick ovens, transformed into crematories.

Vjekoslav Luburic, commander-in-chief of all the Croatian camps, announced the great "efficacity" of this slaughterhouse at a ceremony on October 9, 1942, in which he distributed gold and silver medals, in the names of Pavelic and Artukovic, to the most efficient assassins. During the banquet which followed, he reported with pride: "We have slaughtered here at Jasenovac more people than the Ottoman Empire was able to do during its occupation of Europe." [11]

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[10] George Bilainkin, *Tito* (London, 1949), pp. 39-40.

[11] Luburic now lives in Spain and publishes an Ustashi paper called *Drina,* and writes under the name of "General Drinjanin."

It has already been mentioned that this hero's own sister, Nada Luburic, "operated" in the camp of Stara Gradiska. Such a profession seemed to run in the family. At Jasenovac, Ljubo Milos, whose cynical remarks have here been cited, was one of his assistants, along with Ivica Matkovic and Joso Matijevic.

In September 1942, rich Jews from Banja Luka, Poljokani, Sarafic and Herceg were brought to Jasenovac. A bargain was proposed. If they would reveal where they had hidden their fortune, fifty per cent of it would be given back. An agreement was reached. Three Jews were taken to Banja Luka by the Ustashi who searched their houses up and down. But on the return trip, these unfortunate men were tortured to such an extent that they died soon afterwards.[12]

"A Jew called Ungar Josip owned a stamp collection more valuable than Pavelic's. Every philatelist had to pay for such an insult. Ungar Josip was therefore hanged, which allowed Ante Pavelic, like any ordinary person, to exhibit his collection last year at Buenos Aires, as if it were the least of his treasures. All philatelists know of this theft." [13]

Children were not spared, and special concentration camps were set up for them. Nine of these were at Lobor, Jablanac, Mlaka, Brocice, Ustici, Stara Gradiska, Sisak, Jastrebarsko and Gornja Rijeka. The destruction of infants in these places would seem incredible were it not vouched for by eye-witnesses, one of whom, Mrs. Gordana Friedlender, has testified:

> At that time more women and children came daily to the Camp at Stara Gradiska. About fourteen days later, Vrban (commander of the camp) ordered all children to be separated from their mothers and put in one room. Ten of us were told to carry them there in blankets. The children crawled about the room, and one child put an arm and leg through the doorway, so that the door could not be closed. Vrban shouted: "Push it!" When I refused to obey, he banged the door and crushed the child's leg. Then he took the child by its whole leg, and banged it against the wall until it was dead. After that we continued carrying the children in. When the room was full, Vrban brought poison gas and killed them all.[14]

In 1942 there were some 24,000 children in the Jasenovac camp alone, 12,000 of whom were murdered. A very large portion of the remainder, having subsequently been released following pres-

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[12] Herve Lauriere, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.
[13] Jean-Marc Sabathier in the Magazine *Paris-Match*, May 25, 1957, p. 23.
[14] Statement made by witness Gordana Friedlender, from the shorthand notes of Ljubo Milos case (Belgrade judicial archives), pp. 292-293.

sure by the International Red Cross, perished wholesale from severe debilitation.

An influential South American, Mr. Boisardi, Minister from Chile in Belgrade, broadcast the following frightful testimony from one of the Belgrade networks on November 16, 1952:

> The political attitude adopted during the last war by a small party of Croats who wished to dismantle Yugoslavia in the name of Catholicism, constituted one of the most shameful things for the Christian spirit. To dismantle a country is a big thing, but that is only one of the crimes committed by the Ustashi. The second of their crimes consisted of the cruel and inhuman persecution of the Orthodox population and it seems inconceivable that this could be carried out by Christians.
>
> Americans do not usually believe in such things and they do not like to know about them. However, one fine day the truth will come out just the same. I have lived for a year and a half in Yugoslavia and I am able to know the truth and to hear the living witnesses who even now rise up to accuse the criminals.
>
> There was a young girl belonging to the Serbian Orthodox population in Croatia. Her name is hardly important for the moment, but I would be able to cite it at any time to uphold this terrible story.
>
> It happened in 1941. Her family lived in an old Croatian town and they decided to flee from the persecutions and the threats, and to take refuge in Belgrade. Before her family succeeded in escaping she fell into the hands of the persecutors. She was then 11 years old. She was taken into the worst Ustashi camp, Jasenovac, in which thousands and thousands of Yugoslavs, accused of being Orthodox, were tortured and degraded, burned and exterminated.
>
> The first days our heroine passed in the camp were terrifying. No water, no shelter, no bed, no roof. She was obliged to sleep in the rain on the snow. At first she still possessed her own clothes, but these, too, the Ustashi took. Without clothes and famished, she began her descent into the hell beyond Dante's dreams. The daily "Our Father" was replaced by the formula: give us our daily beating.
>
> This child one day attended a cruel spectacle. Forty students were smothered and then burnt. Another time, the Ustashi drove a hot iron rod into a man's head. Sometimes women were quartered, and to vary the spectacle, arms instead of legs, were torn off.
>
> There were, of course, other diversions for the Ustashi. The best of these diversions consisted of gouging out the eyes of the dying so as to make a "beautiful" collection of how the dying look.
>
> Our heroine passed two whole days bound to a tree. To be more certain that she did not escape, her hair was attached to the trunk. Another time she hung for four hours, head down. Then for two hours she was tied by the hair to a branch where she swung back and forth. Another time she was left head down where she was kept hanging for a whole day. Her hair was also tied to her feet and she was obliged to remain in this position for an entire night. Sometimes,

for a change, the Ustashi made a sort of trestle with red hot iron, and forced the children to sit on it astride.

Other torments existed for the adults, befitting their age. Among many was the woman who was about to give birth to a child. The Ustashi played the role of mid-wife, as well as that of the executioner, thrusting the knife into the mother's womb, they extracted the child and put a cat in its place.

This profusion of tortures, briefly recounted, might still further fill up numerous pages and perhaps books. This river of pain which for a long time flooded the Yugoslavian soil is neither a fairy tale nor an invention for propaganda purposes. I have been able to check on everything myself. I am a South American who has seen with his own eyes the barbarous Ustashi who stem from the barbarous Fascists (Les Nouvelles Yougoslaves, December 8, 1952, Paris).

Aside from these cases of providing them with diversions which have been related by those who have escaped, the principal methods used was cutting the throat with a curved knife known as the "Graviso." Races were organized from time to time. The champion, the indisputable prize-winner of these competitions was Petar Brzica, who happened to be a scholarship student at the Franciscan college of Siroki Brijeg, and member of the "Great Brotherhood of Crusaders." During the night of August 29, 1942, he succeeded in slaughtering 1,360 people.

With such a record, it is easy to understand why His Grace Stepinac, a few months later, welcomed the large Catholic delegation in honor of the annual assembly, by saying: "I am well acquainted with the history of the Crusaders. May our meeting today be an inspiration for our work, and at the same time a proof of the active and extensive character of your organization." [15]

CROATIAN CATHOLIC CLERGY ENCOURAGES ATROCITIES

He could hardly have said more. The collaboration of these pious men with the Ustashi was as "alive" and as "extensive" as it could possibly be, and the "work" left nothing to be desired.

Some of these worthy ecclesiastics were even present at the extermination camps (and standing right beside the executioners, of course)—men such as Martin Cecina, curate of Recica, Lt. commander at the Zepce camp, or the Franciscan, Zvonko Brekalo, an officer in the death camp of Jasenovac. But incon-

[15] *Nedelja* (October 19, 1942).

testably, it was another Franciscan, Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorovic of the monastery near Banja Luka, who carried off the honors, for he was promoted to the rank of Commander at Jasenovac in the autumn of 1942. He deserved this great distinction, for he had tended personally to the massacres in the Serbian Orthodox villages of Motika, Rakovac and Drakulici (on 7 February 1941), with the help of his comrades in the Brotherhood of St. Francis: Zvonko Brekalo, already mentioned, Zvonko Lipovac and the priest, Culina. A detachment of Pavelic's personal guardsmen was sent from Zagreb, commanded by Lt. Josip Mislov, to assure the success of the undertaking. Twelve hundred men, women and children were massacred.

Filipovic-Majstorovic, entrusted with the commandment of this earthly hell, was called "Brother Devil" (Fra Sotona) by the poor victims who played the parts of the damned. A Dr. Nikolic, a Croatian doctor who was his prisoner, tells in the following paragraph of his first meeting with "Brother Devil":

> His voice had an almost feminine quality which was in contrast with his physical stature and the coarseness of his face. Large shoulders, a strong neck, medium build, drooping ears, small treacherous grey eyes . . . the eyes of a neurasthenic bachelor; his lower lip, thick and heavy.
>
> I was hardly seated, and as I sank into my sad thoughts, I heard the orders: "Fall in! Fall in!"
>
> An old Ilija, an Ustashi, appeared on the threshold of the hut, a revolver in one hand and in the other a lash. All the prisoners ran into the courtyard.
>
> Excitement reigned in the huts. Everyone gathered in the only open place, between the kitchens and the barracks.
>
> I was in the second row. Several Ustashi officers, armed with revolvers, ran through all the huts to see if anyone had hidden.
>
> Before us passed six men, their hands tied behind their backs with chains. The Ustashi had their revolvers loaded and aimed. "Fra Sotona" (Filipovic-Majstorovic) walked over and approached our group.
>
> "Where is our new doctor?"
>
> I knew he meant me.
>
> "He is here," someone replied.
>
> He came a little nearer, looking at me in an insolent ironic, bizarre manner.
>
> Come here, doctor, to the front row, so that you will be able to see our surgery being performed without anesthetic. All our patients are quite satisfied. No sighs, nor groans can be heard. Over there are the head and neck specialists and we have need of no more than two instruments for our operations.
>
> And Fra Sotona caressed his revolver with one hand and his knife with the other.

Looking at these victims, who, in a few moments would be in another world, fear written on each face, no one could penetrate the depth of their moral abyss. They silently watched the gathering crowd of more pitiful people, more condemned people like themselves.

Fra Filipovic approached a group of them. Two shots rang out, two victims collapsed, who began to twitch with pain, blood surging from their heads intermingling with the brain of one or the eyes of the other.

"Finish off the rest!" cried Filipovic to the executioner as he put his revolver away.[16]

Another witness, Riboli, also describes this terrible man:

It is simply incredible to think that a Franciscan could be so blood-thirsty. Though Matkovic and Milos, just by the expression on their faces, revealed the baseness of their inner natures, Filipovic-Majestorovic seemed kind and gentle, except when the massacring was going on. Then he was incomparable. He was the leader of all the mass killings in Gradina. He went off to conduct the slaughtering every night and came back in the morning, his shirt covered with blood. None of the executioners of the collective massacres in Gradina ever held out as long as the Franciscan, Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorovic.

One day while at lunch I saw an Ustashi go to him and whisper a few words in his ear. Then the Ustashi went to the main door of the camp and brought back a prisoner. Filipovic got up and fired. The prisoner fell to the floor. And then Filipovic sat down to the table again and calmly finished his lunch while shouting the order: "Call in the grave-digger." [17]

The period during which "Fra Sotona" commanded the camp at Jasenovac did not exceed four months, but during that lapse of time about 40,000 people were "liquidated." Filipovic-Majstorovic testified to this later on, during his trial, after which he was hung wearing his clerical robes.[18]

Friar Sotona was not the only priest in the concentration camp. He was assisted in his work of extermination by other brothers in Christ, among whom were: Brkljanic, Matkovic, Matijevic, Brekalo, Celina and Lipovac.

Vladimir Loncar, an engineer from Pakrac, made the following statement on June 8, 1942:

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[16] Dr. Nikola Nikolic, *Jasenovacki Logor* (The Concentration Camp of Jasenovac), Zagreb 1948, pp. 285-289.

[17] *Zlocini fasistickih okupatora i njihovih pomagaca protive Jevreja u Jugoslaviji*, p. 60.

[18] Of twenty-two concentration camps in Croatia, nearly half of them had ecclesiastics as commanders.

Together with 74 other Serbs, I was transported from Lipik to Pakrac on the Catholic Christmas Day of 1941, and placed in the Jasenovac Camp. As soon as we entered we were met by the infamous Camp Commander Ljubo Milos who, gesticulating, yelled: "Why should I be the one to have to kill all the Serbs?" "There are other camps on Croat territory." After having placed the machine guns around us our luggage was plundered and then Ustashi Lieutenant Ljubo shouted if there was a jurist among us. Vlado Ilic, who was the Chief of the District Court in Pakrac, stepped out of the line. The lieutenant approached and asked Ilic: "How many Croats did you sentence to death?" Ilic replied that as a judge of the District Court he could not sentence anyone to such a high punishment, and the lieutenant then said: "What would you say, if I were to sentence you now to death?" "That is your business," the judge said and stepped back into the line. After a while the lieutenant remembered the judge and said: "Where is that jurist?" The judge came out of the line again, and the lieutenant ordered him to take off his overcoat and jacket. Then he took him to a pile of bricks not far off and took a machine gun from one of the Ustashi and shot three times. The judge fell. After a few minutes Ilic showed signs of life, whereupon the lieutenant returned and shot at him three times again. Then he opened his chest and took out his heart, and turned the judge face down to the earth.

After having finished with him, he ordered those who were from Lika to step forward. Twenty to thirty among them said that they were from Lika, and he took them to the pile of bricks and butchered them one by one. Then the Ustashi flag-bearer, Matkovic, came up to him and asked him to allow him to kill one of the Serbs for Christmas. After the lieutenant granted him this privilege, Matkovic picked out Joca Divljak, manager of a Lipik Social Center, and took him to the pile of bricks where all the rest of the Serbs were slaughtered, and turned him on his back and plucked out his heart while the man was still alive, and then showed it to all of us. However, this was not enough for him. Having just felt the taste of blood, he asked the lieutenant's permission to slaughter ten more Serbs, which was granted. The rest of us were standing and were ordered not to show the slightest sign of disapproval. However, a certain man called Sakic manifested his disgust and the lieutenant came up and shot him three times.[19]

Sima Curkovic, an engineer from Donja Trnava near Bijeljina, made the following statement in the records of June 12, 1942: "In November or December of 1941, a tall and good looking man was brought into the camp together with a group of other Serbs. Two Ustashi, while looking him over, began talking to each other, naturally in order for the man to hear: 'This one must have two hearts.' The other Ustashi answered that this could not be so.

[19] Psunjski, *Hrvati u svetlosti istoriske istine* (Croats in the Light of Historical Truth), Belgrade, 1944, pp. 193-194.

'Well, you will have to convince yourself that he has two hearts.' He pulled out his knife, with which he pried at the man's breast for some time, until the man fell dead, his heart struck by the point of the knife."

Stevo Popovic, a cosmetician from Osijek, had been put first in the Jasenovac camp and then transferred to Stara Gradiska, from where he was able to escape. He gave the following statement on July 12, 1949:

> The Jasenovac Camp liquidated Serbs in another unheard of manner. Performances of the so-called "Gladiator Fights" (as they were called by the Ustashi) were staged. These "Gladiator Fights" occurred when important persons from the Ustashi General Headquarters at Zagreb came to the Camp. The Serbian prisoners would then be placed in a line around the area where the "fight" was to be staged. The administration of the camp picked out two persons from among us, preferably two brothers if they happened to be on hand. Then put them in the middle of the arena and gave each of them a wooden stick. They were instructed to hit each other until one of them fell dead—one of them would be killed anyway—thus they were to determine which one was to remain alive. At the given sign, the fight began and ended with the death of one of them. The "Gladiator Fights" usually lasted around two hours. . . .[20]

Beside the "Gladiator Fights," there was also the following attraction. A cage about one meter high made out of barbed wire would be half submerged in water. The condemned were enclosed in it in a sitting position, since they were unable to stand. The cage quickly finished off its victims in the winter.

When the allied countries began to hear about the atrocities committed in the concentration camps in the Independent State of Croatia, i.e., of the endless cemeteries of people shot, slaughtered and killed with sticks and of people thrown into furnaces and burned to death, the allied press began writing about it and radio broadcasts were made about this new Hitler-like regime. In order to deny these writings and broadcasts, the Croat Fascists had the idea of inviting a so-called international Commission, which was objectively to ascertain the situation in the Jasenovac Camp. The camp was informed of the arrival of the commission, and the administration undertook to camouflage everything so that all would be seen at its best, i.e. the camp was to be turned into an educational institution and this would refute the "false" propaganda. In order to understand better the parody

[20] Psunjski, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.

of investigation which the commission was to undertake, we will mention only a few paragraphs of a statement made by one of the prisoners, Vojislav Prnjatovic, former clerk in the Sarajevo Chamber of Commerce, who was in the camp at the time when the commission came and saw all the preparations that were made. The commission was formed by members of the Ustashi Organization, as well as German, Italian, Hungarian and Rumanian delegates from the Swiss Red Cross, and representatives from the Vatican.

> Already at the end of January, 1942, news had filtered somehow among us that a special commission was to visit the camp, and very soon after we saw that this was true, because an order was issued at once to erect six barracks, similar to the German type of barracks for prisoners, as well as two barracks for the nursery and hospital. Everything was ready by the beginning of February and all the prisoners were transferred from the old extremely unhygienic barracks into these new barracks with bunks. A thorough cleansing of the barracks and surrounding areas was undertaken, as well as tidying up storage rooms and stocks. All the prisoners were also scrubbed and cleaned. There was not much time left and everyone was working day and night. Finally on February 6th, the commission arrived, formed by German, Italian, Hungarian, Croat and Serbian members of the Red Cross, as well as by two Catholic priests on behalf of the Vatican. Beside these members, there were also ten Ustashi, chosen from the leadership of the Ustashi Movement, and one of them was young Kvaternik in person. Naturally, the commission found a wonderfully clean and suitable camp. In order to show the commission how well things went in the chain factory, in which the prisoners usually worked, and how well the workers looked, the management brought in a group of fifteen skilled, healthy-looking workers from the outside, dressed them in green working clothes and placed a white band with a number on their arm, to look like the rest of the prisoners. They made a good impression, and it made the rest of the prisoners look better. Before the arrival of the commission, we were told that we were not to speak to any of its members. If any member of the commission should ask anyone what his name was, he was to answer: "I am prisoner No. 453." If the member of commission wanted any further information, he was to be referred to the administration. We were also told that if anyone should dare to do otherwise than instructed, he would be shot. The day before the arrival of the commission, the nursery and hospital were put in perfect shape, all the sick were taken out—about one hundred of them—and were all killed in front of the hospital itself with sticks and knives. Many of us saw this massacre while passing nearby. After all the sick were murdered, the nursery and hospital were thoroughly cleaned and tidied up, new beds and linen were installed and everything was arranged as in any other hospital. Some of the beds were filled with healthy men from among the prisoners who worked as

nurses and even by the doctors themselves. These men looked quite well because of the light work they were doing. The signs above the sick beds, which were also placed there for this occasion, identified the illness—generally some minor ailment—and gave the temperature, although the people lying in bed were perfectly healthy. The commission saw the camp in excellent condition, that the hospital was in order and the sick well cared for. The Ustashi had not missed a single trick to deceive the commission. The prisoners behaved according to orders, and it is important to state that Pavelic's Secretary Luburic, had told the prisoners that conditions in the camp after the departure of the commission would improve, i.e. "if the commission was satisfied." The commission naturally had found everything to be fine. The prisoners had not transgressed in any way, which they could not have done even if they had wanted to, and the conditions in the camp returned to what they were before, as soon as the administration made sure that the commission had gone far enough away from Jasenovac.[21]

The newspaper called *Nasa Sloga* which is published in Argentina by the Croat emigrants, characterized the Independent State of Croatia as follows:

Who is organizing and leading this "Independent State"? Criminals and prisoners who are sentenced to hard labor have become leaders. Having no ideals, they have invented the tale that the Serbs are the greatest enemies of the Croats, and that therefore, they should be exterminated on their territories, which unfortunately are in their hands. This is why all Pavelic's efforts begin and end with the persecution and annihilation of Serbs. In his bestial hatred against the Serbs, "the leader" aroused everyone he could, i.e. all those who were willing to become tools in his bloody hands. Blood flowed to an extent unremembered in modern history. What is St. Bartholomew's Night in comparison to Ustashi crimes? What are the terrible massacres of the Armenians and genocide of the Jews in comparison to what is going on in Croatia? They do not even look to see who is guilty and who is not guilty. To be a Serb was a crime, and if anyone wanted to practice shooting, they took out a bunch of Serbs and practiced shooting at their breasts. Those who loved to butcher could do so unhampered by anyone, by butchering the Serbs. There were 2,000,000 Serbs on the territory of the present "Independent State." In order to exterminate them, as was done, an organization had to be formed, and this was accomplished.[22]

DOGMATIC PRINCIPLES AND THE PLENARY CONFERENCE OF THE CROATIAN CATHOLIC EPISCOPACY

In spite of the efforts of a thousand priests and monk converters, in spite of the massacres, and in spite of the terror in

[21] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 783.
[22] *Nasa Sloga*, No. 28, May, 1942.

the concentration camps, the results obtained by such pressure seemed very slim, and far from realizing that "harvest of souls" which the Cathoic Church had so counted on.

The Jesuit, Dragutin Kamber, Chief of Police in Bosnia and one of the pillars of the regime, in writing to Pavelic in September 1941, came to this unhappy conclusion: "We were in too much of a hurry in deporting their priests in order to wipe out their religion. We have confiscated their vast estates and massacred them in large numbers, whereas with the others we simply told them that they could not remain here as Serbs and Orthodox." [23]

And the good Jesuit seemed sad to think that all the extreme measures which had been taken had borne so little fruit.

In revenge, cries of violent indignation rose up in the free countries because of the visits, speeches and banquets which continually brought the Catholic hierarchy and the Ustashi authorities together, while the Croatian press publicized their articles and photographs. All this clearly revealed that the activities of the Croatian Catholic Church were identified with the government in the execution of its political and national program in the application of atrocious pressure.

It seemed, therefore, opportune to disguise this too visible collaboration by giving the manifestation a character of independence, in order to reassure world public opinion abroad.

In this report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Zagreb (February 8, 1942), Nikola Rusinovic spoke about his visit to Monsignor Pietro Sigismondi, Chief of the Croat Section in the Vatican, as follows: "During our conversation we began talking about the conversions which were taking place in Croatia. He said that the Holy See was pleased about this, but that the American and British press were condemning us, because the conversion was made under great pressure by the authorities, in which, of course, the Holy See does not believe. It would be advisable to do this more gradually, in order that the Holy See may be spared those reproaches, accusations and difficulties. He mentioned that even the Italian press was publishing, from time to time, news about the mass conversion of the Orthodox people to Catholicism. . . ." [24]

These remarks and fears on the part of Monsignor Sigismondi

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[23] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 746.
[24] See supplement of *Tajni Dokumenti* for photocopy.

illustrate that the Vatican was aware that one day somebody might start asking who was responsible for those conversions.

It was for this purpose that the plenary conference of the Croatian Episcopacy was organized November 17, 1941, in order to re-examine the question of converting the Serbian Orthodox to Catholicism. It was hoped that by so doing the episcopacy might deny the brutal methods heretofore employed, if only for the sole purpose of "explaining" the "Crusade." But the insincerity of this pretext was eventually proved by subsequent events.

It was evident that the bishops who had come to the gathering, in order to drug public opinion, would criticize, yet with moderation, the methods that had been used. But it was futile to count on the slightest change in procedure after this plenary conference meeting. Below are the articles which were adopted:

1. We consider, on dogmatic principle, that all questions pertaining to the conversion of the Greek-Easterners [25] to Catholicism should be decided exclusively by the Catholic Church, which by divine right and canonic prescription, is alone able to give the necessary instructions for conversions, and settle on the regulations. Thus was excluded any influence outside the authority of the church.

2. Therefore, no one outside the hierarchy of the Catholic Church will have the right to choose the missionaries for these conversions of Greek-Easterners to the Catholic religion. Each missionary shall be authorized by his local Ordinariat to conduct a mission with jurisdiction for its spiritual accomplishment. Consequently it is contradictory to the dogma and canonic procedure that missions be organized by representatives of their districts, by Ustashi authorities, or by the State Religious Department, or by any other temporal power.

3. Each missionary depends exclusively on his local Ordinariat, and directly or indirectly on the local curate, for all of his activities.

4. The Catholic Church will recognize only the conversions that have already been made or those that will be made in the future according to dogmatic principles.

5. The temporal administration has no right to cancel conversions which have already been accepted by the church, not only according to canonical laws but also according to civic regulations.

6. With this end in view the Croatian Catholic Episcopacy demands the nomination of a committee of three members selected from within its core: the president of the episcopal conferences, His Grace A. Stepinac, Rev. Viktor Buric, bishop of Senj and Rev. Janko Simrak, apostolic administrator of the bishopric of Krizevci. This committee will be obliged to discuss and solve all questions concerning conversions from Greek-Easterners to the Catholic religion. The committee will act simultaneously with the Minister of Justice and Cults in all that concerns civil prescriptions of the conversions.

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[25] The Serbs of Orthodox religion were officially referred to by the Croatians as *grcko-istocnjaci* (literally translated, Greek-Easterners).

7. For the committee of action concerning conversions of the Greek-Easterners, to the Catholic religion, the Croatian Catholic Episcopacy has elected the following: Franjo Hermann, professor at the theological faculty in Zagreb, Augustin Juretic, episcopal conference advisor, Janko Kalaj, cathechism professor, Krunoslav Draganovic, professor at the theological faculty in Zagreb and Nikola Boric, administrative director at the Archbishopric of Zagreb. This committee will be obliged to take over, in addition, all work concerning the question of conversion of Greek-Easterners to the Catholic religion. It will be under the control of the Bishop's Committee for conversion and will act according to the spirit of the instructions given them.

8. The Catholic Church will accept only persons who, of their own free choice and without any violent persuasion, are urged on by a deep conviction of Catholic faith and truth, and who are in complete agreement with the canonic conditions upon which the conversions are based.

9. In all that concerns the ritual for those converted, the Croatian Catholic Episcopacy accepts absolutely all instructions given by the Holy Congregation for the Eastern Church and sent on July 17, 1941 (No. 2116/36) to the president of the episcopal conferences.

The Catholic Croatian Episcopacy also accepts in its entirety the orders of the Apostolic Holy See of October 18, 1941, concerning the Greek oriental ritual.

10. The committee of Catholic Croatian bishops for the conversion of Greek-Easterners oriental ritual will organize classes for the priests who take charge of the conversions. They will receive theoretical and practical instruction for all the activities in these classes.

11. It is necessary to create a psychological background for that part of the population following the Greek oriental ritual. These people must, therefore, not only have a sworn guarantee but be given all civic rights pertaining to judicial freedom and the ownership of property, so that those of Greek oriental ritual shall feel energetically defended. Condemnation against those of Greek oriental ritual should be pronounced in the same manner as for other citizens, that is after inquiry. First and foremost, all action taken to destroy the churches must be forcefully prohibited as well as Greek Orthodox chapels or alienation from their property.[26]

These decisions were sent with the file No. 253/1941, to the Ordinariats of every diocese. These directions were agreeable and humane in form, but in days when men were being killed without trial, when massive conversions were taking place, when villages were burning and when unheard of pogroms were being conducted, they were sheer hypocrisy.

The Royal Legation of Yugoslavia at the Holy See, by order of the government in exile, replied by a note of protestation No.

[26] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, pp. 628, 629, 630.

1/42, on January 9, 1942, against the foundation of committees for converting the Serbian Orthodox to Catholicism. The Vatican replied, January 25, 1942, by a memorandum in which it said:

"Referring to the Note of the Royal Yugoslav Legation to the Holy See, Number 1/42, of January 9th, 1942, the Secretariat of State of His Holiness has the Honour to inform the said Legation as follows:

> According to the principles of Christian doctrine, conversion must be the result not of exterior constraint but of the adherence of the soul to the truth taught by the Catholic Church. For this reason the Catholic Church does not accept into the Church those who request to enter or return to the Church, except on the condition that they are fully conscious of the meaning and consequences of the action that they desire to take.
>
> Consequently, the fact that, all at once a large number of Dissidents in Croatia request to be received into the Catholic Church fails to give lively concern to the Croat Episcopate, to whom it falls to defend and protect Catholic interests in Croatia.
>
> Far from taking official cognisance, whether explicitly or implicitly, of this fact, it becomes a duty to recall formally to the lawful authorities the requirements that the return of the Dissidents should allow for complete liberty on their part, and at the same time, to insist on the exclusive competence of the ecclesiastical authorities to give orders and directives in regard to conversion.
>
> If an Episcopal Committee has been so promptly constituted, with the charge of considering and deciding on all questions concerning this matter of conversions, this has been done precisely for the purpose of seeing to it that the conversions were—in conformity with the principles of Christian doctrine—the results of convictions and not of constraint.
>
> The Holy See on its part, has not failed to recommend and to inculcate the exact observance of the canonical prescriptions and of the directives given in this matter.

This answer given by the Holy See shows how deeply it was interested in this process of conversion to Catholicism. By justifying its correctness, it took the clerical Ustashi under its protection. It is important to emphasize the fact that this official Vatican document was proclaiming all the Serbs on the territory of the "Independent State of Croatia" to be "Croat Dissidents."

In the instructions given to the Croat Bishops by Cardinal Maglione, State Secretary of the Holy See, of February 21, 1942, they were explicitly asked to hasten the process of conversion, i.e., their return to Catholicism.

Ramiro Marcone, the Pope's Legate, informed all the Bishops

in the Independent State of Croatia by circular No. 256/42 of March 27, 1942, of a letter which was sent to him on February 21, 1942, by Cardinal Maglione, State Secretary, in answer to the report on the "Episcopal Conference," in which it was said:

> I am informing your Excellency of the contents of the letter sent to me on February 21, of this year, by the Cardinal and State Secretary, in answer to the report on the Episcopal Conference, held in Zagreb from November 17 to 20, 1941. . . . The basis on which the questions were selected for discussion by the Bishops and the speed with which the practical solutions were reached prove how deep is implanted the feeling of responsibility, which lies upon them under the present delicate circumstances. . . . Special recognition was given to the Bishops for their determined attitude in requesting that the Hierarchy be given back the right to issue orders and directives concerning all matters of conversion; as well as their endeavors to protect this principle, by which the conversion must be made in accordance with personal convictions and not outside pressure.
>
> In connection with this last question, I feel sure that they will not relent in their further endeavors and will intervene with success when necessary, in order that this principle may be faithfully followed out, and to avoid—with this same zeal, anything which may prevent or make more difficult the sincere return of the Dissidents to the Church; as well as to avoid anything which may be imposed upon anyone's conscience, with the intention of hastening this return. I would also like to point out to your Holiness that the name "Orthodox," by which the Dissidents are called regardless of the meaning of that word, should be replaced with another name such as for instance "Dissidents" or "Schismatics."
>
> The Holy Father, having become acquainted with the report, deigned to express his satisfaction for the efficiency with which the honorable Croat Bishops had acted. As a reward for this pleasure and in sign of his fatherly feelings toward Monsignor Stepinac for having transmitted his filial devotion and that of his brethren, his Holiness is sending to him and to the Bishops in his care, his Apostolic Blessing.[27]

Being aware that their missionary work on the conversion of Orthodox Serbs by armed force had provoked a strong reaction, Cardinal Maglione informed the Croat Bishops to adhere to the thesis that there was no question of conversion here, but only of the "return of the Dissidents." In denying the Serbs the right to Orthodoxy as a religious feeling and conviction, Cardinal Maglione issued the instructions which are repeated here: "I would also like to point out to your Holiness that the name 'Orthodox,' by which the Dissidents are called regardless of

[27] Sima Simic, *Prekrstavanje Srba za vreme Drugog Svetskog Rata,* p. 136.

the meaning of that word, should be replaced with another name, such as for instance 'Dissidents' or 'Schismatics.' "

By such twisting of historical facts, Cardinal Maglione wanted to eliminate any responsibility which may be attributed to the Roman Catholic Church in connection with its proselytism; that all trace of Orthodoxy should be eliminated; and, that even the name "Orthodox" should be wiped out in the "Independent State of Croatia."

However, Cardinal Maglione's directives on "hastening the return of the flock" were not in conformity and in the spirit of ecclesiastical Canon 1351. Because by such instructions regarding conversion, the Croat Bishops were being incited. Whereas these directives were in complete harmony with the order issued on September 16, 1941, in which, "owing to political conditions" the civilian and ecclesiastical authorities were to "perform all matters in connection with legal religious conversions, as fast as possible and without delay." The way in which the General Vicar of the Zagreb Archbishopric, Dr. Josip Lach, who had instructed by his circular of September 26, 1941, the soul-saving clergy to perform the religious conversions "as fast as possible and without delay" has already been mentioned.[28]

By such means, i.e., through the intermediary of Cardinal Maglione, the Vatican was influencing the Croat Bishops to make these conversions of the Orthodox people, which was a form of denationalization of Serbs, in other words, they were promoting genocide.

The Zagreb Archbishopric newspaper, *Katolicki List,* immediately adopted the thesis on "Dissidents." In hailing the Ustashi measures which were being undertaken "for the internal rehabilitation," this newspaper gave special publicity to such "rehabilitation," and with the excuse of protecting Catholicism, praised the measures as follows:

> As the ecclesiastical pastoral newspaper, we cannot avoid mentioning the way in which the Minister of Religion and Education has simplified the regulations in connection with religious conversions. These regulations, as well as other measures, have in a very short time enabled the correction of those painful losses in former Yugoslavia, when so many of our sons and daughters, for the sake of marriage, had left the religion of their forefathers. They are now coming back to the fold of their Church. We are not mentioning this with any proselytic aim or intention, but out of pure feelings for

[28] *Katolicki List,* No. 39, January, 1941, p. 462.

justice. In this case too, we feel what it means to have one's own state.[29]

There is no doubt that the intention of the *Katolicki List* was to mystify the public by such means, i.e., by pretending that "those people were coming back to the fold of their Church," while this was only a means for camouflaging the mass conversions. It is known that only 9,000 Catholics, mostly girls, had changed religion and become Orthodox at the time when they were married. Probably just as many Orthodox, if not more, had passed to the Catholic religion for the same reasons.

On January 16, 1940, Archbishop Stepinac wrote in his "Diary," Vol. II, on p. 413, the following: "The most ideal thing would be if the Serbs were to return to the religion of their forefathers, i.e. to bend their heads before Christ's Emissary, their Holy Father. . . ." [30]

In accordance with the above statement, Archbishop Stepinac had accepted the thesis that the Orthodox Serbs living on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia were "Dissidents of the Catholic Church," by means of which he, too, has revived the old ultramontane thesis against the Serbs. This in turn has contributed to the thesis, that by destroying Orthodoxy in the Balkans, an ultramontane Catholic State could be established in its place. Therefore, based on the principle of "institutiones juris ecclesiastici publici," heretics who had belonged to the Church before could be forced to return to the true religion by means of physical force, and even by death.

As additional proof of the conversion of Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism by force, we will mention the two following documents:

The Ustashi authorities in Metkovic sent to the Presidium of the Conference of Bishops in Zagreb a telegram 354-436-31-27-20, with the following contents: "A great number of Orthodox Serbs, by their own will and without constraint, wish to be converted to the Catholic Religion. Urgent answer necessary, please issue instructions. Ustashi Camp in Metkovic."

The other document, in connection with the above telegram and in answer to it, was sent by Bishop Bonifacic to Dean Bilobrk in Metkovic, under No. K.1685/41 which said in Latin: *"Examinates singulis casibus ad normam codicis. Observatique*

[29] *Katolicki List*, June 3, 1941, p. 246.
[30] Sima Simic, *Prekrstavanje Srba za Vreme Drugog Svetskog Rata*, p. 24.

observendis de catechumenis nihil obstabit reversionem schismaticorum ad Ecclesiam." [31]

What those free-will conversions were, for which the Ustashi were asking permission and behind which stood Bishop Bilobrk, was proved by the fact that Vlado Bilobrk and Don Martin Gudelj from the Metkovic district were the intellectual leaders of the massacres and conversions to Catholicism in the Metkovic district. The greatest massacres were committed on Vidovdan, an important Serbian holiday.

It is also interesting to note that many Croatian Catholics living in the United States are aware of the fact that forced conversions took place. One of these, Bogdan Radica, a professor in an American university, writing in the Catholic magazine, *The Commonweal* (March 1953, pp. 618-621), said: "Some of the friars put their Franciscan garb aside and exchanged the preaching of brotherly love for the sword. . . . The Franciscan friars in Herzegovina felt it their duty physically to defend Catholicism and Croatian nationalism. . . . These friars paid dearly for their mistakes. All of those who were directly involved in the forced conversions to the Catholic Church and in the killings were excommunicated by ecclesiastical authorities."

Radica's contention that these friars were punished by excommunication was immediately denied by Dominik Mandic, the head of Croatian Franciscans in the United States. "Not one of the Herzegovinian Franciscans was excommunicated during the war or otherwise punished by church authorities for acts unbecoming a priest. . . ." [32]

Under such circumstances, how could there be a question of "conviction" among the poor victims led to the apostasy by terror? It was a strange kind of hypocrisy that dared deny there was any constraint. By what miracle had these "Truths of Catholic faith" become suddenly so clear that they alone sufficed in enlightening the "schismatics." And if no pressure was supposed to be exerted on their consciences, how did it happen that in the letter addressed by the Croatian Episcopacy to Pavelic these words were used:

"We must examine the reasons why, up until now, the policy we adopted, in view of the conversions, has not been satisfactory, and avoid the errors of our previous unsuccessful attempts, by

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[31] Quoted by Sima Simic, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
[32] *Danica* (Chicago), April 8 ,1953.

adopting another procedure which would give results relative to carefully laid plans."

In order that certain priests would not observe all restrictions which the Episcopacy affected to uphold, to the letter of the law, the Vicar-general of His Grace Alois Stepinac sent a circular to the clergy to point out how it was to conceive the preparatory instruction for the conversions. The clergy was supposed to grant every facility to the converted, and except for the registered stamp on the request, exact no other tax nor expense for instruction or conversion. The instruction in itself should be considered sufficient, but there again it seemed wise to examine and judge cautiously just what could be demanded of each person. Elderly people, whose memory was failing were to be treated with very special consideration.[33]

Below is an order which His Grace Janko Simrak, member of the committee of bishops for conversions, sent to his clergy. It is dated 1942 and therefore came after the plenary conference held on November 17, 1941. We shall see from it how the conversions to Catholicism were "absolutely spontaneous and of free choice":

> *Directive regarding the conversion of members of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Slavonia, Srijem and Bosnia*
>
> Special offices and church committees must be created immediately for those to be converted. These committees will help the curates in their work, not only in organizing the conversions but in creating parishes of these convertees. Let every curate remember that these are historic days for our missions, and we must under no circumstances let this opportunity pass, but must work with all our strength to attain our goals. Now we must show with our work what we have been talking about for centuries in theory. Up until now we have not obtained appreciable results with conversions, simply because we were undetermined and afraid of small obstacles as well as complaints from the people. Every great work meets with some opposition, but we must not allow our spirits to be lowered. Our universal mission, the salvataion of souls, and the greatest glory for our Lord Jesus Christ, is involved in this issue.[34]

That short phrase, "Up until now we have not obtained appreciable results with conversions," is revealing. This worthy prelate, no longer restrained by Pavelic, showed a certain lightheartedness when he mentioned "small obstacles" and "complaints from the people." From that time on, he was to act without hesitancy.

[33] *Katolicki List*, N° 14, 1942.
[34] *Eparhijski Vjesnik Krizevacke Biskupije* (Bishopric News) Krizevci, n°2, 1942.

His Grace Simrak was finally rewarded for his zeal. The "apostolic visitor," Marcone, told him on June 2, 1942, that Pope Pius XII had named him Bishop of Krizevci, whereas, up until then, he had been only the apostolic administrator.

There is scarcely need to point out that if the Catholic Church had only waited to take to its bosom the neophytes who had been converted in all sincerity and of their own free will, it would have refused, on general principles, all conversions undertaken in an atmosphere of terror, and waited until the end of the war to begin its program of proselytism.

MORE "SAVING OF SOULS"

By continuing investigation, it can be seen how the canonic prescriptions were, in reality, respected by those who had so solemnly brought them once more to light. On December 27, 1941, hardly more than a month after the episcopal plenary conference, His Grace Antun Aksamovic, who has previously been mentioned, referred to the priest from Vukovar in the following terms: "Massive conversions are being organized following the decisions of the competent authorities of the district. These administrations are gathering together large numbers of people for conversion. They come from the various counties of the region and are sometimes composed of the entire population of a village. Every name has been registered on a list and submitted for authorization to undertake a collective conversion, with a single certificate of honesty." [35]

This was the usual procedure. Vjeceslav Montani, Chief of Police at Brcko, arranged the dates for the conversion of the Serbian Orthodox in the different localities. So December 10, 1941, was the date set for the people of Loncari, "without constraint," to show their "true faith." Donji Zabari was scheduled for the 11th and 12th, Gudovac for the 15th and 16th, Covic Polje also for the 16th, Gornji Zabari for the 17th and 19th, and so forth. As can be seen, the miracle of divine Grace was generated according to the most modern techniques. In other words, a veritable assembly line.

On January 13, 1942, the newspaper *Nova Hrvatska* described one of these edifying ceremonies in the diocese of His Grace A. Stepinac:

> Yesterday morning, at Kamensko, near Karlovac, the inhabitants

[35] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 689.

> of the Greek-Easterners ritual from Popovic-brdo were converted. The curate of Kamensko, Kucmanic, presided. Four hundred people attended this conversion ceremony. Among those present were Ante Niksic, the veliki Zupan (prefect of the county) of Pokupje, Ivan Bethlehem, chief of police, Drusak, representing the "Ustaski Stozer" (Ustashi county organization), Rudolf Pavlek, representing the Ustashi youth of Zagreb, Franco Miksic, the head of propaganda, and other noted personalities. The conversion ceremony was preceded by a few cordial words of welcome spoken by the Curate Kucmanic. He appealed to the convertees, begging them to observe the laws of God's Gospel and to be faithful to the Lord, to the Independent State and to its Poglavnik.
>
> After which the prefect, Ante Niksic, took over. In his discourse he said: "Today you have become free citizens of the Independent State of Croatia."
>
> After mass, a group of local musicians played the Ustashi state hymn, while everyone stood with right hand uplifted.[38]

This information raised such a protest and such harsh press notices in the neutral, as well as the allied, countries that Radio-Vatican hastened to broadcast a communication in English, meant for Great Britain and the United States, and which is worth repeating: "It is true that the majority of the population in the village of Popovic, which is in the Karlovac region, has swung over to Catholicism, but this conversion was entirely spontaneous. And in spite of what people say, it was undertaken without any pressure from the civil or ecclesiastical authorities. Statements such as these, concerning the Catholic clergy, should be considered erroneous unless it has been proven that they came from well informed sources."

Thus, according to the speaker representing His Holiness, the four hundred neophytes, suddenly enlightened by divine grace, went forth "spontaneously" to join the Roman Catholic Church. As to the "veliki zupan," the chief of police, and the representatives of the Ustashi organizations and the head of propaganda—they probably just happened to be passing by and hastened, as onlookers, to attend such a spectacle. The evidence is clear: "Honni soit qui mal y pense."

During the year 1942 miracles of this kind were repeated, and did not, of course, interfere in the least with the massacres. And one could often read in the Ustashi and Catholic press information such as this: "A religious conversion of the peasants from the villages of Polog and Lijesce was held at Bosanski Brod the 13th

[38] *Nova Hrvatska,* January 13, 1942.

of this month. About six hundred persons attended mass and afterwards, Mr. Zec, high official of the local authority of Posavje, delivered a speech." [37]

This Mr. Zec was also probably right on the spot as a casual onlooker, and the armed Ustashi led the convertees to mass. These poor victims were apparently so overjoyed on joining the Catholic Church they could not wait before sending telegrams to His Grace Stepinac expressing all their enthusiasm and "spontaneity." Many were printed in the *Nova Hrvatska* and in the diocese periodical of His Grace Stepinac, the *Katolicki List.* If the Archbishop of Zagreb had only kept these touching documents they would have acted as a balm to his spirit when he was reminded of the tact with which he treated those "delicate questions of the human soul," during those fruitful years of propagating the faith.

If great leniency was shown concerning the sincerity of the neophytes, the same was not true in regard to their attendance at the services. It did not make much difference what they thought just so long as they made a show of their Catholic affiliation. As the *Katolicki Tjednik* wrote: "At Bjelovar: All convertees are obliged to perform their religious rites."

Under this title the Roman Catholic parish of Saint-Theresa at Bjelovar printed the following in its local weekly paper, the *Nezavisna Hrvatska:*

> All those who have made a request to be converted to Catholicism will be obliged, beginning on the day the request was made, to be present at every Holy Mass and, above all, during the sermon. Masses, with sermons, are held from 6 to 11.
>
> Convertees are asked to bring small note books every Sunday and on holidays, which will be stamped with the date of their attendance at religious services.[38]

The question of "inner conviction," which the proselytors pretended to exact, became of small importance, since individual and collective conversions took place with the use of printed formulas. The following is from one of the leaflets used in the parish of Banja Luka:

Rules [39]

> . . . issued on ——— in the Roman Catholic Parish Office con-

[37] *Hrvatski List* (Osijek), October 16, 1942.
[38] *Katolicki Tjednik,* August 3, 1941.
[39] Horvat and Stambuk, *op. cit.,* p. 103.

cerning the transfer of those from the Greek Orthodox religion to the Roman Catholic:

The signer declares and requests the following:

"Born on ——— baptized in the Greek Oriental Church and brought up in the Greek Orthodox ritual. By sworn oath I now solemnly declare, before the witnesses whose signatures are appended here below, to accept of my own free will and choice, with no outside pressure, the Catholic religion, convinced as I am that it is only in the Roman Catholic Church that my soul will meet salvation and become immortal. It is for this reason that I desire to be taken within the pale of the Roman Catholic Church.

"At the same time I promise to acquit myself of all obligations practiced by the other members and conscientious believers of the Catholic Church.

"The above rules have been read to me and I acknowledge to abide by them as testified by my signature.

signature of the priest

Signature of the witnesses."

His Grace Jozo Garic, Bishop of Banja Luka, simplified the question. He distributed printed permits to his curates. The following is a copy of one of them straight from the Bishopric's press: "On your request we give you permission to cease at once 'ab excommunicacione pro foro externo' and be taken to the bosom of the Catholic Church and be given the rights to Holy communion.

. . . .

these persons being sufficiently instructed in the truthful knowledge of our Holy religion. (As to those who have not been brought to reason they can be listed purely and simply in the register of the conversions)." [40]

This last phrase which seems to arrange everything so "purely" and "simply" needs no commentary. The episcopacy and also the *Sancti Sedis Legatus* understood the conditions and would accept within the pale of the Roman Church only the true convertees, but the fact was that only quantity counted.

That the Croatian Catholics acted contrary to the canons of the church can be seen from the following citation from a Catholic brochure published in London. "Archbishop (Stepinac) was faced with a terrible dilemma. The state was massacring wholesale those Orthodox who would not accept Catholicism. Either the Archbishop had to relax the canonical rules concern-

[40] *Dokumenti,* Zagreb 1946, facsimile on p. 105.

ing reception into the Catholic Church, or he had to leave these many victims to their fate. He chose the former course." [41]

The problem was to "catholicize" as many Serbian Orthodox as possible while the war lasted. The number of missionaries increased; conversions were carried on day and night; it was a race with time.

The methods, however, remained exactly the same as before the plenary conference of the episcopacy. All the fine declarations about principles served their purpose—that of reassuring foreign opinion, or at least that part of it so susceptible to eloquent phrases. But there was never any question of realizing these principles. A communique appeared in the *Nova Hrvatska* (February 25, 1942) with a marvelous résumé, of only a few lines, about what was going on here and there: "Re-christianization" (sic) is taking place at Petrinja with great solemnity, organized by the curate, Mihajlo Razum. An Ustashi detachment attended the ceremony." [42]

The Franciscan monk, Sidonije Scholz of Nasice, was a ferocious converter. He carried on in the Nasice and Slavonska Pozega districts, threatening the Serbs with death or the concentration camp. A photograph shows him during the massive conversion of several hundreds of people. To his left can be seen a crowd of men, young for the most part, and at his right there are women both young and old. The curate of Kutjevo, Mirko Mezner, stands beside Scholz. The youth is waving small Croatian flags bearing the motto "In hoc signo vinces" (By this sign you will conquer). The little flags were the symbol of Croat nationalism and Catholicism.

Jovo Radosavljevic, a merchant from Suhomlaka and Dusan Bogojevic, a farmer from Gornje Pistane, have reported on the wonderful results obtained by the methods which were adopted: "The Franciscan, Scholz, promised all those who had been imprisoned or interned in concentration camps that they would be released if they became converted to Catholicism. Scholz, the prefect (Zupan) and the Chief of Police from the town of Osijek one day attended a conversion ceremony which took place in their presence." [43]

Still more overwhelming was the deposition of Peter Kovacevic, a teacher from Balenice: "All those who transferred to Catholicism

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[41] Michael Derrick, *Tito and the Catholic Church* (London, 1953).
[42] *Nova Hrvatska,* February 25, 1942.
[43] *Archives of the Refugee Commissariat,* B.XXXVI, 716 and BX XXVII n°957.

did so under frightful terror. Sidonije Scholz was at the head of the Catholic missionary priests who overtook us in the district of Nasice. He ordered the death of our priest, Djordje Babic, whom they arrested during the night and horribly tortured. The Ustashi cut off his nose, ears and tongue and literally tore off his beard before stabbing him in the stomach." [44]

In the village of Maklosevac, district of Nasice, this same Scholz converted in a single day the following persons: Mile Ciganovic, Smiljana Ciganovic, Zarija Ciganovic, Gospava Miljus, Eva Dragic, Rajko Dragic, Blagoje Rajic, Milutin Rajic, Sremka Rajic, Milena Rajic, with her three children, Nikola Dragic, Milan Vukadinovic, Andja Vukadinovic.

And in the village of Crmosnjak, also converted in a single day: Zivko Rajic, with his wife and two children, Vlade Rajic, Mile Vukojevic, Ilija Matosevic, Ilija Dejanovic, Pero Dokic, with his family, Milan Dejanovic, Pero Dejanovic and his family, Nikola Dokic and his family, Milan Dokic, Stanko Katanic and his family, Dusan Katanic, et al.

This veritable "record-maker" carried on massive conversions equally in the following localities: Zoljan, Moticina, Lisine, Orahovica, Budimci, Londzica, Gradac, Granice, Bracevci, Poelici, Pod, Martinci, Cepin, Preslatinci, Podgorje, Cenkovo, Dobrogost, Kucanci, Razbojiste, Caglin, Nasice, Miholjac, Pod. Slatina, Belo Brdo, Sarvas, Vukovar, Osijek, Vuckovac, Borovo, et al.

A poor woman, Ljubica Zivanovic from Borovo, described the methods that were usually practiced: "When I appealed to the Chief of Police, Nemet, at the Town Hall of Borovo, in 1941, to spare the lives of my two daughters who had been imprisoned and then deported to Vinkovci, he referred me to the Catholic priest, Andjelko Gregic, at Borovo. The priest replied that he could do nothing for my children because they had not accepted conversion to the Roman Catholic religion. At the same time he informed me that we, too, would follow in the same path as our daughters if we did not accept the Catholic religion." [45]

Such, in reality, was the so-called "psychological preparation" which the bishops preconized. Such as it was, it doubtless suited them, for after Scholz' funeral (he was killed by the Serbs who put up a fight against the conversions) the *Katolicki List,* the organ of the Archbishopric at Zagreb, wrote: "Building a free country, so fervently desired, meant the bloodshed of this new

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[44] *Op. cit.,* B.XXXVI, n°3971.
[45] *Op. cit.,* B.XXXV n°659.

martyr who died in the name of religion and for Catholic Croatia." [46]

The following testimonies reveal still further how the priests and the monks, controlled by the two episcopal committees, fulfilled their Holy mission "without exerting the slightest pressure on human minds."

Stevo and Jovo Danilovic, Luka Smoljanac and Mile Misan all peasants from Croatia—recorded the following conversions undertaken by the priest, Franjo Pepinic: "Toward the end of 1941, the priest, Franjo Pepinic of Slavonska Pozega, came to our town and said: 'According to the law you must be converted, otherwise you will be sent to concentration camps.'

"In January 1942, the municipality posted a warning whereby any person who did not accept being converted to Catholicism would be deported to a concentration camp. Therefore, we were obliged to appear before the priest, and 150 people in our town were converted. After the collective conversion before the Church of St. Theresa at Pozega, the Ustashi Commander, Petranovic, asked us to join the ranks of the Ustashi." [47]

The peasants, Desanka Radunkovic, Milena Radunkovic, Radojka Radunkovic, Leposava Radunkovic and Petar Marovic, all from the village of Brezek in the district of Podravska Slatina, accused Josip Selak, the priest of Nove Bukovice, of having practiced forced conversions in collaboration with Franciscans and supported by the Ustashi authorities of Nove Bukovice.[48]

Marija Misljenovic from Podravska Slatina gave the following details: "The priest, Julije Birger, informed me that my husband, who had been sent to the concentration camp at Jasenovac, would be liberated on the condition that his whole family became Catholic." [49]

The peasants from the region of Virovitica: Mile Plackovic, Milenko Varvaric, Djoko Vracaric, Cedo Brisevac, Djoko Vukomanovic, Danica Solar and Ilinko Covic have testified to the atrocities of the monk, Srecko Majstorovic, guardian of the convent at *Captol:* "The Ustashi commanders Pcelic and Misko Uglarik, informed us that if we did not wish to be expelled from our homes we should accept conversion to Catholicism. After being menaced by Uglarik, and in order to spare our families

[46] *Katolicki List*, n°23, 1942.
[47] *Dokumenti* (Zagreb, 1946), p. 66.
[48] *Op. cit.*, p. 67.
[49] *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

persecution and torture in the concentration camps, we were obliged, with the utmost regret, to accept Catholicism." [50]

Djuro Kangrga, employed in the postal service at Nova Gradiska, also described the clerical offensive that was being carried out everywhere: "In 1942, we Serbs were warned by the priest, Franjo Matica from Nova Gradiska, that if we did not give up Serbian Orthodoxy and transfer to Catholicism we would be sent to the concentration camp at Jasenovac. During a conversion ceremony, Matica preached against the Serbian religion, saying that only the Roman Catholic religion was the right one. He praised the magnificent Ustashi State and told us that we should accept and obey it and that all those who had not been married in the Catholic Church should separate or be re-married in this church. He promised that Pavelic would succeed in annihilating all those who had joined the underground." [51]

The inhabitants of Slobostina: Nikola Pavlovic, Djuro Lazic, Nikola Pavlovic, Jovo Lazic and Teso Milanovic reported that in February 1942 the priest, Bozidar Santic (sent from Zagreb), told the inhabitants of the town who had gathered in the primary school: "I have been sent to your town and its surroundings to take charge of the conversions of the Serbs. All those who accept being converted will have their future assured. Consequently, you should all accept this solution because it is the only way you will find salvation. If you decide to the contrary you risk death or the concentration camp or any other kind of misfortune." [52]

A railroad employee, Jovo Milinkovic, testified to an apologetic explanation made by the priest, Josip Orlic from Sunja: "On Orlic's orders, the Serbs were summoned and forced to gather in the primary school. The Franciscan, Orlic, told us that the Catholic religion was the oldest and consequently the truest. Since the Serbian Orthodox religion was forbidden in Croatia, the Serbs should be converted to the Catholic religion, and thus become real Croats." [53]

A group of Serbs at Tenj reported: "On December 12, 1941 we were converted by force to the Catholic religion, during a ceremony which the following Catholic priests attended: Josip Seper, priest at Osijek, Franjo Jungvirt from Petrijevci, the

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[50] *Op. cit.*, p. 74.
[51] *Op. cit.*, p. 77.
[52] *Op. cit.*, p. 78.
[53] *Archives of the Refugee Commissariat*, A.XII n°408, August 8, 1942.

Franciscans, Ambrozije Miletic and Kolb from the Franciscan monastery at Osijek." [54]

Milan Ljustina, Head of the Income Tax Administration, at Donji Lapac, denounced the activities of Dragutin Kukolj, priest at Gospic: "I was forced by Kukolj to transfer to Catholicism, for I was told that it was the only way to escape death." [55]

The inhabitants at Dalj—Nikola Mitrovic, Ljubomir Berkovic, Marko Popovic, Lazar Bojakovic, Savo Ristic, Persa Ljubujevic, Nikola Marinkovic, Sava Vasic, Vojin Ajdukovic, et al—referring to the forced conversions in their locality, stated: "The Franciscan, Peter Berkovic, an Ustashi Colonel, organized on November 6, 1941 with the curate of Dalj, Josip Astalos, the conversion ceremony which Hefer, the governor attended." [56]

Vida Zarkovic, Milica Zarkovic, Milan Blagojevic, Stanko Miskovic, Nenad Dokic, Zarko Vucovic, and Stevo Kovacevic from Erdut made the following deposition against the curate: "The forced conversion of the Serbs was organized on October 26, 1941 in our region. The priests from Osijek and the curate, Josip Astalos from Dalj, attended. First it was the Ustashi who forced us to the conversion, and then the priests." [57]

Milka Dobrijevic reported on the proceedings of the missionary curate of Vocin: "From the very beginning of the occupation the curate, Martinec, took sides with the Ustashi from Vocin and Podravska Slatina. Accompanied by a few Franciscans, he organized the forced conversion in our region." [58]

Jovo Tihomir, from Jaksic, told about the curate, Ambrozije from Jaksic: "Ambrozije Sirc told us that our lives would be saved only on one condition, that we adopt Catholicism. The day of the conversion, police agents guarded the church doors. Once the ceremony ended they invited us to leave the church and go to the primary school where Josip Starcevic, head of the Ustashi of this region and a noted criminal, made a speech. A few days after the conversion, the curate, Ambrozije Sirc, ordered that those who had contracted a mixed marriage would have to be remarried in the Catholic Church." [59]

The inhabitants of Duvno and Eminovoselo, Luka Savic, Sefko Loknic, Ljube Zdilar, Nezir Loknic, Bosa Zelen, Vebija

[54] *Dokumenti,* Zagreb, 1946, p. 87.
[55] *Archives of the Refugee Commissariat,* A.II, n°3823.
[56] *Dokumenti* (Zagreb, 1946), p. 60.
[57] *Op. cit.,* p. 61.
[58] *Op. cit.,* p. 63.
[59] *Op. cit.,* p. 74.

Djulic, Vojo Zelen and Vlajko Kovacevic, accused the Franciscan, Mijo Cujic, curate of Duvno, of ordering the widespread massacre and forced conversion of the Serbian Orthodox in the district of Duvno.[60]

The inhabitants of Jasenak, in the county of Ogulin, who were refugees in Serbia, also testified against Ivan Mikan, curate of Ogulin, who has already been mentioned: "Action for conversion to Catholicism was undertaken at Jasenak by the guardian of the hunt, Ivkovic, and Josip Abramovic, the director of the saw mill, who were helped along by the police agents. They told us that our only salvation was to be converted to Catholicism. Then the curate, Ivan Mikan, made his appearance at Jasenak at least twice. Each time he made out a list of Serbs who should be converted. Each person had to pay him 170 kuna, thus permitting him to collect about 80,000 kuna. Once back at Ogulin, he wrote, inviting us to come there. Fearing lest we be thrown in jail we replied that our conversion would take place when he returned." [61]

The secretary of the Catholic Bishop at Banja Luka, the Franciscan Kruno Saric, proved to be an eloquent preacher, and the Ustashi always attended his conversions. They were the surest guarantee of success.

After every collective conversion it was the custom to send telegrams of "thanks and loyalty" to His Grace Stepinac.

For instance, the following wire was printed in *Nova Hrvatska:* "2,300 persons assembled in Slatinski Drenovac from the villages of Drenovac, Pusina, Kraskovic, Prekorecan, Miljani, and Gjurisic today accepted the protection of the Roman Catholic Church, and send their profound greetings to their spiritual Head." [62]

The Serbian Orthodox "convertees" from the villages of Cacinci, Kutjevo, Vocin, Pozega and others did likewise with the same spontaneity.

In the regions where anyone dared put up a resistance to Catholic proselytism, the punishment was not long in coming and was just as "collective" as for the conversions, for death and the concentration camp awaited all recalcitrants.

If the instructions given by the Church, concerning the conversion of the Orthodox Serbs and Jews to Catholicism, are com-

[60] *Op. cit.,* p. 82.
[61] *Archives of the Refugee Commissariat,* n°355, 352, 3649, 1941.
[62] *Nova Hrvatska,* April 9, 1942.

pared with the decrees of Ustashi authorities concerning the concentration camps, it would seem that the two orders had been synchronized. As soon as the Serbs refused to abandon their faith and their church, heads began to roll, villages were destroyed, and the death camps were full to overflowing. After the punishment raids on the Serbian villages, missionaries made their appearance "in order to save the souls of those who survived."

But it often happened that the Ustashi and the missionaries go to their destination together, and thus the mass conversions continued. It is a known fact that many of those who through terror finally accepted the Catholic religion were eventually liquidated.

And while some of the priests thought that Catholicism signified the salvation of human lives, the majority of the missionaries were more interested in the Ustashi state than in the Christian Catholic Church.

That the conversions to Catholicism and the exterminations took place simultaneously, after a well-defined plan, is shown not only by the words and behavior of the priests and the members of Croatian religious orders, but by the promotions and grades which they accumulated: priest, officer and police agent, and there were large numbers of them from the very first day that the satellite Croatian State was founded.

One detail should be emphasized which, although of a "temporal" character, is very significant. It has already been explained that each new convertee had to give the sum of 170 kuna to the priest who took her or him within the pale of the Roman Church. Thus, in addition to the merit of having saved so many souls, many of the saintly men were justly rewarded by the accumulation of appreciable fortunes.

CHAPTER VII

More Massacres and Forced Conversions

THE CATHOLIC SLOVENES SEND A PROTEST TO THE VATICAN

OFTEN violent protestations have been mentioned. Cries rose up from all parts of the world against the barbaric Ustashi and the scandalous support lent by the Catholic clergy. Below are a few excerpts from a letter written on January 20, 1942, by Prvislav Grisogono, now living in London, a Croat, Roman Catholic and former Yugoslav minister and at the time a refugee in Belgrade, to His Grace Stepinac:

> The inhuman and anti-Christian attitude of a great number of Catholic Croatian priests has not only brought consternation to some of their colleagues, but also to some of the Croatian intellectuals, and as one of these, I am greatly affected and shocked by the absence of any public disapproval on the part of the Catholic hierarchy, which should have expressed Christian and human sympathy toward the victims of the massacres and the incredible inequality shown to the Serbian patriots of the Orthodox religion. I even wondered with dismay how and why the authorized Catholic Croatian groups had not felt it their duty to make a public disavowal concerning the forced conversions of the Serbian Orthodox and the confiscation of their possessions in the name of the Catholic Church.
>
> All priests who have taken part, in any way whatsoever, in Ustashi misdemeanors should, without consideration for their rank in the religious hierarchy, be rigorously condemned and without regard for their clerical robes or their priesthood.[1]

Veceslav Vilder, a Croat and member of the Yugoslav Government-in-exile at London, condemned the attitude of his Grace Stepinac in these terms, when he broadcast on February 16, 1942 over the BBC: "At the present time the most terrible atrocities are being committed around Stepinac's circle, and the blood of our brothers is running in the gutters, gouging an even deeper abyss. The Serbian Orthodox are being converted by force to Catholicism, and yet we have not heard one word of protest from the Archbishop. Instead, we read about his attendance at the Fascist and Nazi parades. . . ."[2]

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[1] *Glas Kanadskih Srba* (Windsor, Ontario), April 5, 1951.
[2] *Le Monde* (Paris), May 27, 1953.

The most characteristic reaction came from the Catholic Slovenes who were deported to Serbia by the Germans. The members of their committee went before the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate at Belgrade, where they were received by Josip, the Bishop of Skoplje. This was perhaps a case unique in history, for the Slovenes acquainted him with their desire to be converted to the Serbian Orthodox religion, as an act of indignation against all that had come to pass in Croatia and, above all, the forced conversions.

Bishop Josip, already informed of this trend among the Slovenes, made the following reply: "I have given the necessary instructions to the clergy to strongly advise those Slovenes who make a request for conversion to Orthodoxy to wait until the end of the war when they may become members of the Serbian Orthodox church of their choice. At the moment people are in a state of revolt and agitation. They must quiet down. They must stop and think. And then when they make their decision they will be sure of its being accepted. Having acquired them as brothers who know and understand us and who have shown us their friendly spirit, this in itself is sufficient reward. There is no need of our trying to resemble those, even in looks, who have undertaken converting our Serbs by force."

There is a striking contrast between this scrupulous discretion and the cynicism of the terrorist converters. The Slovenes of Serbia could but withdraw when faced with this honorable refusal, but on March 1, 1942, they sent a memorandum to His Grace Ujcic, the Catholic Bishop at Belgrade, which was destined to find its way to the Holy See. It reads as follows:

> In the Independent State of Croatia all the bishops and Orthodox priests have either been killed or imprisoned or sent to concentration camps. Their churches and monasteries have been destroyed and their goods confiscated. The main and acknowledged objective of the politicians of Zagreb was to wipe out the Serbian population in Croatia. Conversion to Catholicism in Croatia had nothing to do with religious conviction and was a humilating procedure for the Catholic Church, whose prestige and dignity has been greatly compromised. The impartial observer is obliged to admit that the conversions of the Serbian Orthodox to Catholicism took place under tremendous political pressure. It is certain that the number of Orthodox in Croatia who became converted by inner conviction to Catholicism could be counted on one's fingers.
>
> In spite of the recommendations and orders of the Bishops, the forced conversion of the Orthodox population continued. The conversions, which, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church,

should have been considered void, were so numerous that the Croatian bishops, during their conference of November 17, 1941, formed two commissions to investigate the question.

The formation of these commissions incited the greatest discontent in all the Serbian circles. For if the Croatian bishops really had the intention of carrying out their plans they would not have set up commissions to examine the question of conversions, nor would they have accepted having anything to do with them. It would have been more normal and much simpler to have given strict orders to the subalterns of the Catholic clergy to accept in their church only those who had given up their religion, not because of fear or for personal advantages, but because of a deep inner conviction. These priests would have then acted contrary to order, continuing to accept conversions forbidden by the Canons and would have been punished by the bishops with all the severity of ecclesiastical law. Alone, such a procedure would have convinced the Serbs of the sincerity of the Croatian bishops.

The forced conversion of the Serbian masses, the tortures inflicted on their priests, the destruction of their churches and convents was done, so it is said, in the interest of the Catholic Church. Such proceedings naturally affected the interests of the highest Catholic circles. The Serbs could not understand the reasons which motivated the silence of the Holy See, face to face with the horrors committed in Croatia. The conversion which signified the "Croatization" of the Serbs was the common aim of the Croatian episcopacy and the Ustashi government. Now we understand, the Orthodox argued, why no bishop in Croatia raised his voice in defense of the Serbian Orthodox Christians even at the risk of compromising his position or himself. An apostolic heroism such as that would have been necessary, not only to save the honor of the Catholic Church, but also for its prestige in the Balkans.

The facts that are mentioned in the memoir have deeply affected us. What will be the future relationship of the Serbian Orthodox and the Roman Catholics in our country? We are convinced that precious time has been wasted, time which should have been used to attenuate the effects of the religious war of fratricide. A whole generation will bear the consequences.

We understand that the Holy See has delegated a special envoy to Zagreb to study the situation in Croatia. We are convinced that having knowledge of the report, the Vatican will raise its voice against the tragic fate that awaits the Serbs and will thus save the prestige of Yugoslav Catholicism.

Being well acquainted with the situation in our country we consider that it is necessary that:

1. The Holy See publicly condemns the bloody persecution of the Serbs and their church.

2. That the Holy See forbids all conversions to Catholicism under the existing reign of terror.

3. That if certain persons wish to be converted to Catholicism, in spite of the general prohibition, they may do so with the special permission of the Holy See which will examine each case.

4. That the Holy See advises the Croatian bishops to take the Serbian Orthodox Christians and their priests under their protection with an apostolic courage ready to meet any sacrifice.

We beg Your Eminence to be so kind as to transmit this letter to the Holy See. We remain, Yours most respectfully, the Slovene Catholic leaders now living in Serbia.[3]

The Slovene priests, respectful of canonic laws, were no longer looked upon kindly in Zagreb. This could be observed by the written request to hasten the conversions, sent to the Presidency of the government by Juricev, the notorious Franciscan who was Head of the Religious Department: "A large number of Roman Catholic parishes should be founded to provide for the estimated million convertees. This is a task that cannot be undertaken by the secular clergy. I am strongly against permitting foreigners, under any circumstance, to hold offices in these parishes, and above all, the Slovenes, because in our opinion, their co-operation would be a terrible blow to the Croatian national standing in these parishes."[4]

This was a far cry from the humanistic and liberal Slovene priest to the converter with a machine gun who "cleaned up everything from baby chicks to old men."

STEPINAC WAS PAVELIC'S HEAD MILITARY CHAPLAIN

In the guise of a reply, or rather a challenge, to those who everywhere implored him to stop the scandalous aid which the Catholic clergy lent to Pavelic's blood-thirsty regime, the Vatican made a decision: It named His Grace Stepinac head military chaplain of the Croatian army.

It is true that this nomination was made "sine titulo," the Independent State of Croatia not being officially recognized, nor its army considered as a belligerent instrument. On the other hand, the first prelate of Croatia was not obliged to exercise, effectively and personally, his new functions.

His Grace Stepinac announced his promotion to the Ordinariats by such letters as the following, addressed to the Ordinariat of the Archbishopric of Sarajevo (No. 22/BK/1942 on January 20, 1942):

"I have the honor of informing the honorable Ordinariat that

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[3] *Tajni dokumenti o odnosima Vatikana i ustaske nezavisne drzave Hrvatske* (Zagreb, 1952), pp. 98-99. See also Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, pp. 785-787.

[4] Horvat and Stambuk, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

I have been made Head Military Chaplain 'sine titulo' for the Croatian army. I have designated as my substitutes the Rev. Stjepo Vucetic, military priest of the Croatian Armed Forces, and Rev. Vilim Cecelja, superior military priest at the Ministry of the Croatian Armed Forces, and I have given them jurisdiction with the necessary authority endorsed by the Holy See.

"You will eventually be given the names of the military chaplains in the territory of your Ordinariat by the office of the military vicarage at the Ministry of the Croatian Armed Forces." [5]

There is one savory detail connected with this affair. Vilim Cecelja, replacing His Grace Stepinac as leading chaplain, with the grade of a Lt. Colonel, was at the same time Pavelic's confessor.

As soon as the new promotion of the Archbishop of Zagreb was made known, approximately 150 priests applied for voluntary service as chaplains in the Ustashi army, and even His Grace Stepinac's own secretary, Stjepan (Stephen) Lackovic (now in Los Angeles), was sworn in to one of the units. The official organ, *Ustasa,* reported in its 47th issue of November 22, 1942, as it did in previous issues, some of the salient acts of these bellicose ecclesiastics who went against the United Nations and were decorated not only by Pavelic, but also by the Germans.

His Grace Stepinac, from time to time, honored the leave-taking of the legionnaires for the front by his presence. He was accompanied by His Grace Ramiro Marcone, the "apostolic visitor," flanked by officers and Nazi diplomats. As can be seen, this prelate had a great conception of his functions and duties as military chaplain, even "sine titulo." Pavelic had every reason to be satisfied, and he proclaimed far and wide: "I am convinced that posterity will be grateful to you Croatian priests for having inculcated our first soldiers of the Independent State of Croatia with a wholesome spirit, a high morality and respect for God, as well as with fearlessness and courage in facing the enemy both within and without." [6]

His Grace Stepinac not only showed his warlike attitude when he was with the military Ustashi in the barracks, but also when he was with the intellectuals taking charge of the mobilization of the Croats for the cause of the Croatian satellite state, where

[5] *Vrhbosna* (Sarajevo), No. 2, 1942.
[6] *Nova Hrvatska,* Nov. 26, 1941.

he helped to encourage and boost their drooping morale. It was, above all, among the members of the Catholic organization, "Domagoj," that he was the most active. On July 7, 1944, he made a speech in which he said: "Croatia today is passing through a difficult period and it is likely that more difficult times are yet to come. But we must remain optimistic and confidently believe that Croatia will survive and that no one can destroy it. . . . The people of Croatia are bleeding for the state and they will succeed in saving and maintaining it. Any action taken against the people and against Croatian independence should be discouraged. On the contrary each individual should sacrifice himself for the defense and the forming of the state." [7]

His Holiness Pius XII remained, as always, cordially paternal toward Pavelic's collaborators: "The Ustashi youth of the crusades, numbering 206, all dressed up in Ustashi uniforms, had a private audience with the Pope on February 6, 1942, in one of the most sacred halls of the Vatican. The reporter wrote that 'the most touching moment was when the youthful Ustashi begged the Pope to bless their Poglavnik, the Independent State of Croatia, and the Croatian people. Each member received a medal as a souvenir.' " [8]

CROATIAN CATHOLIC PRELATES SIT IN USTASHI PARLIAMENT; PAVELIC CREATES THE CROATIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

On January 24, 1942, Pavelic issued a decree concerning the establishment of a Croatian Council of State. Among its provisions were the following:

> I. On the basis of a Croatian historical constitutional law, I hereby order the organization and composition of a Croatian Council of State.
>
> II. Until a new composition of the Council of State is ordered, it shall consist of the following persons:
>
> 1. Surviving representatives-Croats of the last Croatian Diet of 1918;
>
> 2. Surviving representatives-Croats of the Skupstina elected in 1938, and the founders and life members of the Central Committee of the former Croatian Peasant party;
>
> 3. Surviving members of the council of the former party for the acquisition of Rights for Croats elected in 1919;

[7] *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), October 1, 1946, and Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 1033.
[8] *Katolicki Tjednik,* February 15, 1942.

4. Chairman, their deputies, and commissioners in the national headquarters of the Ustashi liberation movement;
5. Representatives of the German national minority.
6. Those who have been elected as senators, as well as those who have belonged to the government of General Simovic, who launched the former state in a war against the axis powers, may not be members of the Council.[9]

In accordance with the regulations concerning the functioning of Parliament (No. LVI-459-Z-1942), each deputy must take the following oath: "I swear by the all-powerful God to be loyal to the Poglavnik, leader of the Independent State of Croatia, that as a member of the Croatian parliament I shall work for the prosperity of the people and the State, and that I will acquit myself conscientiously of my duties according to parliamentary law.—Amen." [10]

Thirty-six deputies of the Croatian Peasant party, more than half of those elected in the general election of 1938, entered the Ustashi Parliament. Those who were acquainted with the situation in this party were not in the least astonished, for, as Elizabeth Wiskemann so aptly said: "The right wing of the Croatian Peasant Party had often flirted with the Ustashis." [11]

On February 23, 1942, a Te Deum was sung in the Church of St. Mark at Zagreb. Surrounded by all the ecclesiastical dignitaries, His Grace Stepinac waited for Pavelic at the portal of the church, with a microphone held before his lips: "The re-inauguration of the Croatian Parliament," he cried, "is proof of the deep and all-abiding consciousness of your responsibilities, a burden which you will wish to share with your co-citizens. This re-inauguration is accompanied by the prayers of the church and the prayers within our own hearts. May the Eternal Judge who governs the destiny of the peoples with his powerful right hand lay the foundation and carve in the hearts of our co-citizens a deep and lasting awareness that they may successfully help you in the reconstruction and the resurrection of our beloved land, founded on eternal evangelical principles." [12]

But a weekly magazine, called the *New Review,* published an article at that same time, under the title "Personalities Talked About in 1941," and in a column, "The Criminals," wrote of

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[9] *Narodne Novine,* January 27, 1942.
[10] *Ibid.,* February 21, 1941.
[11] Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Partitioned Jugoslavia, Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946,* pp. 648-649.
[12] *Katolicki Tjednik,* February 26, 1942.

Pavelic: "He is unanimously voted the supreme criminal for the year 1941." [13]

The atmosphere that reigned at the Croatian Diet can be imagined by the following reportage from the Nazi agency DNB: "The first session of the Sabor (Diet) reached its pitch Friday during the speech of Marshall Kvaternik who replaced the Poglavnik and the Minister of the Army. Among those present were the Ministers of Germnay and Italy, representatives from the Italian and German forces, military attaches, and Croatian headquarters, etc. In his speech, the orator rendered homage and expressed the gratitude of his people to Germany, the first state of Europe in favor of the founding of Croatian independence. And when Marshall Kvaternik proclaimed that the Croatian soldiers were inseparably bound as brothers in arms with the soldiers of the Fuhrer and the Duce all the deputies rose and applauded wildly." [14]

His Grace, Ramiro Marcone, could be seen in the diplomatic box as representative of the Pope. A picture taken on this occasion appeared in the directory of the Independent State of Croatia. Another shows His Grace Stepinac in his parliamentary seat. It was he, who after the Marshal's discourse, spoke in the name of the Church.

So as to emphasize mutual authority and responsibility, the Ustashi government granted 11 seats in Parliament to the representatives of the Catholic Church in Croatia, two of which were occupied by Archbishop Stepinac and Bishop Autun Aksamovic. The other priests and religious members were: Irgolic, Ante Loncaric, Stjepan Pavunc, Juraj Mikan, Matija Polic, Toma Severovic, Boniface Sipic, Franjo Skrinjar and Stipe Vucetic. The latter as has been mentioned, replaced His Grace Stepinac as leading chaplain.[15]

Thus it was officially revealed that the Croatian Catholic Church, so forgetful of the spritual nature of religion, lent its political support to the Ustashi government.

* * *

On February 24, 1942, during one of the very first sessions of Parliament, Andrija Artukovic, Minister of the Interior, gave a résumé of the Jewish situation: "The Croatian State considers

[13] *New Review* (London), February 1, 1942.
[14] Agency DNB, February 28, 1942.
[15] Horvat and Stambuk, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

that the Croatian people should, alone, govern Croatia, and not let it be governed by the Jews. There is no time for sentimentality when the destiny of a whole people is at stake." [16]

Then, during the session of February 25th, the Minister of Justice, Mirko Puk, defined the policy of the government in regard to the churches:

> Concerning the problem of recognition and tolerance of religions, the government of the State of Croatia has adopted the principles that we have taken to hear, inspired by the founder of the party of Right and the father of our country, Ante Starcevic. Faithful to its principles, the government of the State of Croatia actually recognizes three religious denominations in our State; the Roman Catholic of latin and oriental ritual, the Moslem Church, and the Swiss Evangelical Church.
>
> The government refuses legality to the sect of the so-called Old Catholic religion, and as a religious group this sect will not be recognized.
>
> I wish also to mention the so-called Serbian Orthodox Church, that is, the Greek religion of oriental ritual. I firmly declare that the Independent State of Croatia cannot and will not recognize the Serbian Orthodox Church.
>
> If certain persons, for different reasons, are opposed to these decisions and in disagreement with this irrevocable law, they will be free to leave the territory of the State! [17]

This text was unanimously approved by the Diet including the eleven members representing the Roman Catholic Church. Once again the test was met, publicly and officially, that by affecting to respect the beliefs and the rights of the Serbian Orthodox Church, in the declaration at the Plenary Conference, the Croatian Episcopacy simply went through a mere form, hoping to exonerate itself in world public opinion, while not in the least revealing the real aim of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

Archbishop Stepinac also took part in the Ustashi "Parliament," and according to one of his biographers, spoke on April 23, 1942, saying the following: "I, as the representative of the Lord's Church, cannot do otherwise but also speak my word . . . not because I desire to give any advice in purely political matters, for which the Church has no authority from its Lordly founder to speak, but in order to turn the eyes of the legislative body, such as the Parliament, toward God who is the foundation and source of all legislatures . . . in order that it may pass

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[16] Official Gazette, *Narodne Novine*, n°46, February 25, 1942.

[17] *Narodne Novine*, no. 47, February 26, 1942.

honest, just and possible laws." (His secretary told me personally that he was honored for having been asked to speak on that occasion.[18]

He delivered this speech in April, 1942, while we know very well what Parliament had legalized up until then, and what new crimes the Croat Government had committed by that time.

* * *

Needless to say, the atrocities continued at the same rhythm. Below are a few examples of what took place in 1942, before and after the reunion of Parliament, which, according to His Grace Stepinac, would help the Poglavnik reconstruct Croatia "on an everlasting foundation of evangelical principles."

On Saint Sava day, January 28, 1942, an inhabitant from Kozibrod passed to see one of his friends at Segestin and told him about the great excitement that reigned at Golubovac. A unit of massacrers was advancing towards the villages of Golubovac, Draskovac, Maskarevac, Segestin, Nevina Polja, Osredak-Zrinj. Everyone had to flee.

> In a half hour the whole village was roused. Those who had sleds loaded them with children, provisions and blankets, while the others took their horses or carried what was strictly necessary on their backs. Cattle and poultry were left behind. People thought, "Oh, the storm will soon pass over and we'll soon be back to our daily household duties."
>
> When the cracking of guns was heard at Loncar, not far from the village of Draskovac, the people who were escaping with their sleds took a round about way through Zilici-Kepcija-Djurici and Sveta Petka, on the fringe of the forests. This group fortunately escaped. But those who were ill and obliged to stay at home, and a certain number of others who did not want to leave, hid in their cellars or climbed up in the fruit trees. The new fallen snow was up to their knees, making walking very difficult. But the traces of their foot-prints was an even more serious handicap.
>
> In an hour, a unit of killers reached the village, and dividing themselves in groups, they managed to surround it. The order was given to kill all those who tried to escape. All kinds of arms were used and even clubs. In a single cellar, which belonged to a peasant named Trivun, they killed sixty men, women and children with bombs. Here, every family was wiped out. A woman of sixty-five, the mother of two Yugoslav officers in active service, was killed, her body mutilated with knives and bayonets.
>
> After the massacre of the population, the Ustashi set fire to the

[18] Zagrebiensis, *Nedovrsena eroika nadbiskupa Stepinca.* ("The Unfinished Eroica of Archbishop Stepinac"), Rome, 1953, p. 16.

village. They used explosives to destroy the schools, the churches and the largest houses. In one single day, Segestin was completely destroyed. The village of Rogulje met the same fate.[19]

Milka Majkic, a Serbian peasant from the township of Lusci Palanka, in the district of Sanski Most, made another deposition: Interned by the Ustashi at the camp of Zemun, yet having been recognized as "incapable to work" she was sent back by the Germans to the refugee commissariat of Belgrade at the expense of Serbia. She gave a poignant description of all she had lived through in western Bosnia: "In 1942, on the same day as Saint Sava, an Ustashi punishment raid took place in the villages located along Grmec mountain. The pursuers managed to cut through the woods and captured many adults and children. Some of the prisoners were sent to concentration camps where the temperature was 25 below zero. Every prisoner who was unable to follow the convoy was shot down by a bullet at the nape of his neck." [20]

In the village of Ruma, the Ustashi arrested about sixty Serbs, among whom was Doctor Stepan Suvajdzic, and also Nedeljkovic and Bosiljkovic. All were brought before a special court where two lawyers, Georg Miler and Ivan Dvornik, were members of the bar. They were all condemned and shot, in a place called "Rupcage," near Ruma.

In 1942, the Ustashi arrested a group of twenty Serbs at Sid. They were tortured and then thrown into the brick oven. Among the victims were: Stevo Stanojevic and his wife Ljubica, Radomir and his wife, Mr. Rankovic's wife and daughter, the wife of Sumanovic, the priest, and the two Trubic sisters.

In the autumn of 1942 and the winter of 1943, about 6,000 people were killed by the Ustashi in the province of Srem alone.

No less than 2,600 Serb bodies sank for eight days in a gigantic muddy ditch at Sremska Mitrovica.

So as to make more room, quick lime was thrown over them to dissolve their remains more rapidly.

Among the victims of Sremska Mitrovica were members of a Serbian family of the Nazarene religion (this sect somewhat resembles the American Quakers). All the believers lived together in perfect harmony of brotherhood and love. Originally from the region of Srem, the family was composed of five brothers, one of whom was living in

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[19] Petar M. Stojin in the paper *Voice of Canadian Serbs*, April 4, 1957.
[20] Herve Lauriere, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Belgrade and was spared. But the other four—Jefta, Milivoj, Dusan and Mladen—only simple peasants from Banostar, in the district of Ilok, were not able to escape:

> Jefta was killed first by the blow of a mallet over his head. Then came Mila and Katica, the wives of those two brothers and their children, Gaja, Ilija, Jova, Pera, Miodrag, Dusan, Nikola, Borka, Lenka and Mara (a little girl of six). The three younger brothers and the two brothers-in-law were the last to be finished off in the following order: Mica and Veselin, the great uncle Jovan and his wife Mila, uncle Zarko and his son Pavle.
>
> If Jefta and a few others were knocked unconscious before being thrown into the quick lime, Milivoj, Dusan, Milan, Katica and Pere were bound together with the other peasants around a hay stack, which was set on fire and they all died completely carbonized.[21]

Forced conversions, persecutions and massacres still continued even after the Serbs took to the underground. The Chetniks and partisans, becoming more and more numerous, were able to lend a hand and they even succeeded in threatening the very existence of the satellite state. Therefore, the movement had to be wiped out with urgency. It was thought that a way had been discovered by offering apparent satisfaction to the religious Orthodox. By a decree issued on April 3, 1942 (No. XC-817-Z), the government proclaimed the foundation of an autocephalic Croatian Orthodox Church.[22] The decree (No. CLXIV-1386-Z-1942) on the 5th of the following June set up the constitution.[23] This "satellite" church, in the minds of the founders, was to draw the rebel Serbs to conversion under the influence of the docile priests, for since it had not been possible to "catholicize" them, at least they would be "croatized." It was thought that by the indirect method, they would eventually belong to the Union, equally desired by the Croatian nationalists and the Holy See. This became quite clear in the report addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Nikola Rusinovic, who represented Pavelic at the Vatican.

The President of the Croatian Peasant party, Macek, who is now in the United States and now also a member of the Knights of Columbus, perhaps the most powerful Catholic organization in America, has the following to say in his autobiography: "After the towns had been pacified to some extent (i.e., after most of the Serbs were exterminated or had fled), the Ustase

[21] Adam Pribicevic, *Krapinci,* article published in *Voice of Canadian Serbs* (Windsor, Ont.), August 17, 1950.
[22] *Narodne Novine,* April 7, 1942.
[23] *Ibid.,* June 5, 1942.

turned with terrible vehemence to the systematic extermination of Serbian villages in Upper Croatia and northwest Bosnia. In June 1941 a frightening number of Serbs were slaughtered in the village of Gudovac near Bjelovar. At the same time several hundred Serbs, who had gathered within the sanctuary of a church at Glina, were pitilessly murdered. But the notion that the Ustasa forced mass 'conversions' of Serbs to Catholicism is entirely false." [24]

This last sentence of Dr. Macek's simply does not correspond to the truth. The welter of information gathered together in this book is more than ample proof of the mass forced conversions under the guidance of Ustashi priests and Ustashi storm troopers. Even Pope Pius XII admitted to certain Americans in private audience that these forced conversions took place.

Macek is very eager to prove that the Ustashi did not persecute the Serbs for religious reasons, and says: "The best proof that the Ustashi did not persecute the Serbs for religious reasons is that later on, in 1942, they themselves founded a Croatian Orthodox Church, headed by a Russian emigre bishop (Georgije Maksimovic-Ivanovic). Soon afterward, the planned mass killings of the Orthodox population subsided." [25]

It seems to this writer that Macek is contradicting himself, for in the next paragraph (the very next sentence in fact) he writes: "Meanwhile, the general slaughter of men, women and children went on."

The Vatican viewed the role of the Croatian Orthodox Church quite differently than Dr. Macek. Witness the report of Pavelic's minister at the Vatican, Rusinovic, of 9 May 1942, which he sent to the Croatian minister of foreign affairs, Lorkovic, in which he says, among other things:

> 3. Croatian Catholic Church and Greek Catholics. Recognition of the Orthodox * church, as I have already reported to you, has been well-received. In that the Holy See looks for the way to religious unity and the ending of the schism in Croatia. That would be the "greatest gift" which Croatia could bestow upon the Holy See. In order to speed up the process, it is thought that it is necessary to establish Greek-Catholic centers in areas where the Orthodox live, and that Dr. Simrak, who is regarded here as the best informed man in the Balkans on religious questions, should undertake this work. Some Catholic representatives look with a jaundiced eye upon the conversions to the Eastern Catholic ritual (they would like to go directly to

[24] *In the Struggle For Freedom* (New York, 1957), p. 234.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 236.
* They mean Croatian Orthodox Church.

Catholic rites), but the Vatican believes, and Stepinac agrees, that this is the easiest and speediest road toward union, which doubtless will be of political importance for the Independent State of Croatia. I have heard that Dr. Simrak has already talked with the Poglavnik about that, so I hope that it will soon be realized. I would beg you that you too help in this matter, which will certainly be of general benefit. Dr. Draganovic will certainly be opposed to that, but I could show him the correctness of this approach.[26]

Dr. Draganovic was against such a slow way. He urged the rapid catholicization of Orthodox Serbs, if necessary by fire and sword. He is now an emigre, and since 1945 at the Vatican.

Also interesting in this connection is Rusinovic's report of 28 May 1942, also to Lorkovic. In it, among other things, he says:

On Wednesday I visited Cardinal Tisserant for the third and last time. You have certainly heard from past reports who this gentleman is and how he looks at things. . . . I will not bother you with a detailed report of our talk, but will tell you a few things, which will be enough. He says that the Germans recognized the Croatian Orthodox Church when together we killed 350,000 Serbs. What do we have to complain about the Serbs, he says, when we are behaving toward them much worse than they did toward us, even though we are supposedly more cultured and Catholic. In one camp alone there are over twenty thousand Serbs. In their struggles against the Turks, the Serbs gave at least that many, and perhaps more, lives for the West and for Catholicism. The Croats received the title "Antemurale Christianitatis" because they were Catholics. He knows who the Croats are by that which they did in Lorraine, etc., etc.[27]

Rusinovic's successor, Lobkowicz, on 20 December, 1942, also reported to Lorkovic about a visit to Cardinal Tisserant:

. . . in it [the talk] it came not only to the Cardinal's negative views not only about the Croatian state and the present regime, but also about the Croatian people as such. He says that as early as the Thirty Years' War the Croats were known as barbarians. In his region [Lorraine] they burned several places, so that they are generally known as bad men. . . . Concerning the Croatian Orthodox Church, he said that it signifies nothing, because it originated by the will of the Poglavnik and through his will can again cease to exist.[28]

There were some in the Holy Father's intimate circle who showed a certain skepticism, such as was reported by Erwein Lobkowicz.

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[26] See supplement of *Tajni Dokumenti* for photocopy of Rusinovic letter.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.* Note Lorkovic's hand-written notation: "After such insults Croatia cannot maintain any connections with T."

As a proof that conversions to Catholicism went on regardless of the formation of the so-called "Croat Orthodox Church," we give the following authorization made by the Ministry of Justice and Religion, issued on June 1, 1942:

"The Ministry of Justice and Religion may authorize, according to its own judgment, the formation of a new parish or parish station regardless of the number of converts and settlers."

Here is an official admission that the Croat Orthodox Church was really a kind of façade to fool the West. Moreover, killings and conversions continued.

The International Christian Press in Geneva, Switzerland, bulletin No. II, March, 1942, wrote, as follows, concerning the persecution of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia:

> This informataion describing the situation of the Orthodox Church in Croatia has reached us from a Bulgarian source:
>
> In the present Croatian territory, the Orthodox Serbs are now being persecuted in a most cruel manner. Of the Eastern Orthodox bishops some have been killed, several have been imprisoned, the others have been forced to leave the country. Of the Orthodox priests a considerable number have been assassinated, many have been imprisoned, the others have been thrown out of the country. Thus this large body of Eastern Orthodoxy is now without any pastoral guidance, and there are no longer any Orthodox religious services. It is counted that several hundred thousand Orthodox have become victims of the systematic persecution through imprisonment, maltreatment, plunder, and that several tens of thousands have been killed. One of the officials of the Croatian State has formulated the purpose of this policy as the elimination of the Orthodox leadership, so that the rest without leaders can be catholicized, and so within ten years Croatia will become a Catholic State.
>
> Many Orthodox churches have been destroyed, many Orthodox institutions have been confiscated, others again have been transformed into Catholic churches. The monasteries, several of which have a great tradition behind them, have been transferred to Roman Catholic orders. Even the patriarchal center at Sremski-Karlovci has not been spared. The patriarchal church there was sealed after the most valuable treasures had been taken away, the patriarchal library has been plundered, and the patriarchal palace has been occupied by Catholics.
>
> Orthodox officials are being notified that in the Croatian State only those can remain in state service who belong to the Roman Catholic Church.
>
> Certain Roman Catholic periodicals in Croatia approved this persecution. Thus the organ of the Archbishop of Sarajevo defends the use of "revolutionary methods" in "the service of truth, justice, and of Christ, that the struggle against evil should not be carried on in a noble manner and with gloves."

Just as the French prelate Tisserant showed what little confidence he had in the "autocephalic" Orthodox Church, he also showed that he was not afraid of expressing his personal reactions concerning the horrors that were being committed in Croatia. He spoke to Pavelic's legate at Vatican: "If you only knew how the Italian officers stationed along the Adriatic coast speak of you! It is indeed frightful. From their reports, just to imagine that such terrible brutality exists is unthinkable. Murders, fires, crimes of every kind, and pillages are the order of the day in these regions. I know for sure that even the Franciscans of Bosnia-Herzegovina took an active part in the attacks against the Orthodox population and the destruction of the churches. I learned from an infallible source that the Franciscans from Bosnia-Herzegovina behaved atrociously. How such acts could be perpetrated by civilized and cultured men, let alone the priests, is inconceivable." [29]

Unfortunately this was only one personal reaction and not that of the Roman Curia or of Pope Pius XII, who graciously replied a few days later to the "sincere and humble" congratulations which Pavelic had sent to him for the anniversary of his enthroning.[30]

The fact that His Holiness wanted to "ignore" the atrocities committed by the Ustashi, just as he had "ignored" those committed by the Germans during and after the war. Moreover, the Poglavnik had the best of lawyers, the Archbishop of Zagreb, chaplain "sine titulo" of Croatia's "glorious army."

Nikola Rusinovic again confirmed the report sent by him May 9, 1942 to his superior and friend, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mladen Lorkovic, at Zagreb:

> As you must know, His Grace Stepinac has now returned to Zagreb after a twelve day visit in Rome. He was in fine form and had a pugnacious attitude toward all the enemies of the State. He submitted to the Holy Father a nine page type-written report. He showed it to me and I can assure you it stands for our point of view. In attacking the Serbs, Chetniks and communists, he has found things to say which even I had not thought of. I shall not go into detail but I assure you that it is a precious contribution to the policy I have followed until now. He believes the situation in the country is secure and is unsparing in his praise of the efforts and projects of the government. He says that he is now surer than ever of the destiny of the people and the Croatian State, for the authorities and the peo-

[29] *Ibid.* Also see p. 115.
[30] See *Hrvatski Narod,* March 21, 1942.

ple have shown a sufficient amount of will power and comprehension permitting us to hold our ground. No one will be allowed to attack the Independent State of Croatia and show the Croatian people in a bad light. This was precisely the reason why he went to Rome in order to stigmatize the lies that have spread in regard to the Holy See.

These "lies" unfortunately were the frightful realities which have been listed in the previous pages.

The Catholic Church in Croatia made use of every occasion to manifest its attachment to the Ustashi Government, the bloodiest of all Nazi regimes, as will be seen from the following:

"Today, at 10 o'clock in the morning a reception was held in the Archbishopric, up on the *'Captol,'* for ecclesiastical representatives, who were received in audience by his Excellency the Croat Metropolitan and Archbishop, Dr. Alojsije Stepinac, before the beginning of the New Year."

The Archbishop was greeted by the General Vicar, Bishop Dr. Franjo Sallis Sewis, who in a lengthy speech wished his Excellency much happiness in the following year. "We entered into the last year with fear that our country might be carried into the whirlwind of war. Our premonition was correct. However, in all that confusion, historical events took place, and through the merits of our Leader, we have acquired our free and independent state."

The Honorable Archbishop first thanked him for his warm wishes, and then gave thanks to God for having bestowed upon them the gift of their own homeland. He thanked the clergy for having fulfilled such exemplary work as shepherd of their frocked.

The Archbishop spoke further about the war, and having in mind the struggle of United Europe in the East, said: "God was merciful to us. He was merciful to all humanity, when he permitted the big operation to be performed against the poisonous ulcer, which would have certainly opened and would have destroyed the world. We are, therefore, ready to bear all the sacrifices, which may be asked from us, for the final glorious victory of justice."

The Honorable Archbishop again praised his clergy and wished that God may grant them health and strength in order that they may "persevere in their great and responsible work." [31]

Truly one could not have said more in less words. The Croat

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[31] This report is from *Nova Hrvatska*, January 1, 1942.

Episcopacy and clergy were without reserve for the Ustashi state. For them victory of Nazism against the United Nations was a victory of justice; and the slaughter and conversion by force to Catholicism, which was undertaken by one part of the Croat Catholic Clergy, as well as monk-commanders of the concentration camps, are given the greatest recognition and praise from Archbishop Stepinac. One more proof of this is that not a single priest or monk who had collaborated with the Ustashi Government has ever been prosecuted by the Church or unfrocked.

The collaboration continued. On St. Anthony's day in 1942, His Grace Stepinac launched the following circular: "June 13th is the name day of our glorious leader of the Independent State of Croatia, the Poglavnik, Ante Pavelic. I invite all the clergy to celebrate this occasion the Sunday following this day on June 14th, this date being more convenient for the people. There will be the Te Deum and prayers read for this occasion. All the people are asked to pray with humility for the good of the Independent State of Croatia and for the Poglavnik." [32]

The "apostolic visitor" himself came to the rescue, and was not afraid of showing his Ustashi loyalty. At the ceremony consecrating Bishop Petar Cule at Mostar, His Grace Marcone, in his discourse, begged the population to remain faithful to the Holy See which for centuries had lent aid against oriental barbarism, and he expressed the wish that Croatia surmount the actual difficulties and begin flourishing under the leadership of Ante Pavelic.[33]

It is necessary to recall a revealing document of 31 June, 1942, which contains a mixture of the macabre and the comic. It was sent by the Franciscan Ivo Brkan of Koraca (Bosnia) to the Ustashi commander at Derventa. It states that approximately 500 Serbs in the parish had been deported to concentration camps. Useless to say that the religious officials made no reference as to their fate. That was why, considerate of their wives, he wrote: "There are 500 widows in the five villages who could marry Catholics, for there are no more Serbian Orthodox. This would be an excellent chance to indoctrinate them, and they in turn would indoctrinate their families with Catholicism and Croatism. This could be done in a relatively short space of

[32] *Hrvatski Narod*, July 16, 1944.
[33] *Katolicki Tjednik*, October 25, 1942.

time and would demand very little effort from the church and the authorities. Our people are already coveting the land and the beautiful women. We are conscious of the difficulties that the State feels in acknowledging the decease of these people, and it is for this reason that we are asking for instructions that we may know how to legalize their decease while safeguarding the reputation of the State." [34]

SREM—ARENA OF USTASHI AND VOLKSDEUTSCHER COLLABORATION AND RIVALRY

Srem, the rich province between the Danube and Sava rivers, in which the Serbs were in a majority and the Germans and Croats in a minority, represented a separate area at the beginning of the German occupation. According to the initial German plan, Srem was supposed to become a new state, built upon the ruins of Yugoslavia, and consisting of Serbian Vojvodina (Backa and Banat), as well as southern Hungary, intermingled, here and there, with German settlements (Volksdeutscher). This new state, in the heart of *Podunavlje* (Central Danubian Basin), was even to be given the name of "Donauschwabenland," which later was to become the richest part of the Third or even Fourth Reich.

But since Fascist Rome had annexed Dalmatia from their Croat allies, and since this monstrosity could not survive economically, the diplomatic game between Berlin and Rome tended to upset the German plans for Srem. Therefore, two influences were felt in Srem: the Ustashi and the German, equally bloodthirsty in their purpose, but nevertheless different in their intentions. Hitler had appointed Dr. Vladimir Altgajer as leader of the Yugoslav Volksdeutscher minority in Srem, and the murderous Ustashi bands had selected Victor Tomic and Juce Rukavina as their leaders. These two invaders, however, were not to achieve harmony in their work, because the ruthless Nazis were to be less heartless and less unmerciful toward the unfortunate people than the Croat Ustashi under the Catholic Church, which had forsaken God, Christ, law and morality.

We shall, therefore, follow the development of these fateful events in Srem, i.e., the destruction committed by these two insatiable beasts together with their wrangling over the plunder,

[34] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, pp. 677-678.

until the final Nazi victory, which brought great relief to the people, who preferred the lesser of two evils, as is always the case when human beings are in danger. This saddening review of events in Srem will give us a full view of the activities of these two apocalyptic monsters, the only difference being that the crimes of the Ustashi far surpassed the unequalled Nazi frenzy.

While Yugoslavia was at war on the two fronts, with Germany and with Italy, the Croat Ustashi opened up a third internal front which was the worst of all, to the very gates of Belgrade, supported by the *Volksdeutscher* minority in Srem. On April 12, 1941, the very day when Belgrade fell, these two hordes, armed and united attacked the Yugoslav Cavalry Corps at Slankamen, which was withdrawing toward Belgrade, and the Yugoslav army in Ruma, which was withdrawing toward Serbia. On the next day, April 13, 1941, from Zagreb, German Gen. Stancer asked for full cooperation between the German minority (Volksdeutscher) and Macek's Militia, the so-called "Hrvatska Zastita" (Croatian Militia), in accord with Macek's proclamation of April 10, 1941, issued in the very middle of the war.

The so-called leader of the Croat Army and second in command after Pavelic, Slavko Kvaternik, in his Order of the Day of April 13, 1941, thanked Dr. Macek [85] and his Croat Peasant Party and armed semi-military organization, *Hrvatska Zastita*,[86] for their collaboration in destroying Yugoslavia. This same proclamation named this organization the "Croat Defense Huntsmen," who are actually the same as the "Ustashi Huntsmen," of the innocent Serbian and Jewish populations in Croatia. Thereafter this Independent Croat Peasant organization combined with Ustashi elements under Ustashi command, following a policy of organized crime, which was also to be felt in Srem, due to the support of the *Volksdeutscher* people and their Nazi protectors.

A new law passed in Croatia, the so-called "Law of Defense of the People and the State," which introduced the "Special National Courts" for the extermination of Serbs and Jews,[87] was also introduced in Srem, with Dr. Altgajer's consent and by an order issued by Hitler's Envoy in Zagreb, Dr. Kasche.

This law was in fact passed by Hitler in Nurnberg, then intro-

[85] *Narodne Novine*, April 15, 1941.
[86] *Ibid.*, April 21, 1941.
[87] *Ibid.*, April 17, 1941.

duced in Croatia and supplemented by other laws passed during the same period, including the "Law on Confiscation of Property,[38] the Law on Racial Origin,[39] and the Law on the Protection of Arian Blood and Honor.[40]

The Croat and *Volksdeutscher* authorities agreed to pass these laws, but they disagreed on their application, as will be seen. Humiliating limitations were imposed on Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. These were accepted by the people who did not even suspect what was in store for them. They were excluded from parks, cinemas, theaters and even restaurants. They were not allowed to enter food stores or market places before 11 A.M., which meant that they would find only what was left over by the favored races. Conspicuous identifications were worn by all three peoples, i.e., the Jews wore the Star of David on a yellow band around their arm, and the Serbs wore a band with the letter "P" (Pravoslavni or Orthodox).

All Serbs and Jews from 15 to 50 years of age were obligated to perform forced labor from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M., such as the clearing of rubble from the ruins, the cleaning of streets and railway stations, loading munitions (with which they were to be murdered not too long afterwards), and doing everything as ordered by the Croat and German authorities, and even by certain low officials. They were excluded not only from state and municipal employment, but from all the banks and establishments under state control as well. They were not only forbidden to buy new property, but all their movable and real property was confiscated as well. The profits derived therefrom did not always benefit the Croat State or German funds,[41] but favored privileged establishments.[42] If anyone refused to do an assigned job he was sure to be tortured to death.[43] The transfer

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[38] *Ibid.*, April 18, 1941.

[39] *Ibid.*, April 30, 1941.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Heading this policy of plunder of Serbian and Jewish property for the benefit of the Croat State, were the following individuals: Franjo Ducmelic, Dragutin Majcan, Stipe Dosen and Stjepan Cvjek; and high state officials, Victor Justic, professor; Cvrkovic, lawyer, Colonel Grgic, and Gustav Krklec, poet who became Pavelic's Ustasha, and later Tito's President of the Croat Writers.

[42] The agreements were so worded as to represent free sale in regular payment or in the form of a gift for some previous obligation. Among those who became known as over-night millionaires and property owners, were the following: Luka Amdajic, Ante Omrcenovic, Boza Ponjevic, Alexander Rig, Paul Tajs—all high Croat or German state officials.

[43] The most prominent among these criminals were: Stjepan Majurdzic, Luka Puljas, Mato Gordanovic, Ivan Kostenac, Jakov Hameder, Otto Stugenfon, Ferdinand Krizel—all high functionaries of this plunderous band in Srem.

of property to their persecutors was made and accepted by the Court without comment, until such time as the Ustashi and German beasts quarrelled over the loot and its distribution in Srem. The Jews were not allowed to move out of town, but Serbs, having enough jewelry or money to buy their way out, could go to Serbia with empty pockets. But later, owing to the conflict over who was entitled to the plunder and to whose jurisdiction it belonged, individuals from whom property was taken were murdered in order to conceal the foul deeds.

The conflict which arose between the Ustashi and *Volksdeutscher*, or between the Croats and the Germans in Srem, began to attract the attention of the Croat leaders in Zagreb in August, 1941. Dr. Milovan Zanic, a member of Pavelic's Government, harangued the pro-Nazis masses [44] in Srem, saying that Srem was Croatian and that the cities and villages would soon be filled with Ustashi. When he stopped his harangue, Dr. Mirko Puk, Minister of Justice, took over, followed by Dr. Andrija Artukovic, Minister of Interior and hence Chief of Police. Next came Mile Budak, who was Minister of Education and a Croat ideologist, who thundered: "Take up axes and guns in your hands, instead of legal clauses. . . ." [45] Pavelic also arrived in Srem and during a meeting held in Vukovar threatened: "This is now the Ustashi and Independent State of Croatia, it must be cleansed of Serbs and Jews. There is no room for any of them here. Not a stone upon a stone will remain of what once belonged to them." [46]

These statements, preparatory acts and laws formulated by the Croat leader and his aides, were followed by Victor Tomic's arrival in Srem, where he came to organize and supervise the Emergency Courts. This heartless and vicious inquisitor began his work with a proclamation which read as follows: "I have come to destroy all those who oppose the new order in our dear Croatia." Together with himself, Tomic brought these new laws to Srem: Law on Investigation;[47] Law on Special Extermination Courts;[48] and Law on the Ustashi State Authority.[49] All these

[44] *Novi List* of June 3, 1941.

[45] This speech was published as Government policy in the Official Ustashi Newspaper of August 4, 1941, No. 171, p. 2, and in the *Katolicki Tjednik* of August 17, 1941, which approved Budak's speech and suggestions.

[46] Pavelic's speech and the law passed in Srem correspond to August 14, 1941, and were published in the newspaper *Hravtski Narod* of August 15 and 16, 1941.

[47] *Narodne Novine* of May 5, 1941.

[48] *Ibid.*, April 7, 1941.

[49] *Ibid.*, April 30, 1941.

laws were actually related to each other, since a person considered by the first law to be unworthy of membership in the Croat Catholic Church was sentenced to death by the Courts without appeal as if it were the normal course. Unworthy people were all the Jews, and, among the Serbs, all business people, priests and intellectuals, with certain rare exceptions. The Law said this literally, as well as the interpretation and circular No. 48468/41, passed by the Pavelic Government and transmitted to the entire Croat Catholic community by the Catholic newspaper.[50] The Catholic Church newspaper in Croatia, *Katolicki Tjednik,* published articles on May 25, 1941, written by its shepherds of the soul, who are today scattered throughout the free world. They incited the religiously blind masses of Croatia to persecute and kill all the Jews, outlawed in Croatia by the State decree passed on April 30, 1941.[51] These tracts and falsehoods advocating a pogrom, too debased even for the African jungle, and all the more so for central Europe, were propagated by the same ecclesiastical paper, stating that ". . . the Serbs are the greatest enemies of the Croats, while the Jews and Masons are the greatest enemies of all Europe." [52]

While Jewish heads were rolling and Jewish temples falling, while Serbs were undergoing forced conversion, tortures unheard of in the days of Torquemadas during the Spanish Inquisition, took place in Srem. Those very tortures shocked the Bishop of Djakovo, Dr. Antun Aksamovic, to implore the Serbs by saying: "As Catholics you may remain in your homes. You will be able to improve your properties and unhindered educate your young to believe in God and the State of Croatia. If you join the Catholic Church you will secure for yourselves the salvation of eternal souls." [53] But this was forbidden to the best among them, i.e., all merchants, priests and intellectuals. It was legally impossible for them, and this shows clearly that the policy of conversion was not meant to save souls but was motivated by chauvinism and a desire for extermination in a totalitarian way toward purely Croatophile ends.[54] In only one administrative

[50] *Katolicki Tjednik* of June 30, 1941.

[51] *Narodne Novine,* April 30, 1941 and *Katolicki Tjednik,* May 25, 1941.

[52] *Katolicki Tjednik,* June 15, 1941.

[53] Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen,* p. 618.

[54] An entire book would be necessary to tell of the harangues and plundering that went on simultaneously, as well as persecutions, murder, conversions, and extermination where they often tried to outdo each other, and were constantly being supplemented by new laws published in the *Narodne Novine,* the official newspaper, and in church publications *Katolicki Dnevnik,* and *Glasilo Hrvatske* from April 17, 1941, until the end of 1943, and in part even after that.

district in Srem, namely Ilok, fifty Orthodox priests were arrested on August 21, 1941, and massacred one night at the prison, while only two among them saved themselves by escaping to Serbia. The tragedy in other districts was somewhat less, because the alarm was given for the people to escape, in which they were helped by the Germans from Srem, often in exchange for large sums of money. But in spite of this, the Ustashi-Nazi collaboration in Srem succeeded in eliminating 90% of the Serbian clergy, reducing it to a few Russian priests, who had fled the Russian Empire after the outbreak of the Revolution and who found asylum in Serbia. All sixteen Orthodox monasteries in Fruska Gora, which for three hundred years had been the Orthodox Athos on the Danube, were left occupied only by Russian monks,[55] before the majority were finally plundered, burned down and destroyed. Four of the Orthodox saints, who had slept there for centuries and among whom two were Serbian Emperors, killed while defending Christianity from Asia in the salvation of both Serbs and Croats, were doomed to destruction. Ironically enough they were saved by the Germans, i.e., by the enemy himself from the so-called Independent State of Croatia, which was part of the same nation, of the same blood, and of the same language, but inflamed by inhuman religious hatred, much worse than the former hatred of Islam against the Christians.

With the conversion of the Serbs in Srem, the Catholic Church of Croatia lost popularity with the people of Srem. Therefore, the state which imposed the pogrom decided to take direct action. The same methods applied in Bania, Lika, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia, could not be applied in Srem because of the existing partnership between the Ustashi and the Nazis. These methods were: mass pogroms and genocide without trial, by gun fire, firing squad, axes, tanks, fire and sword, in peaceful villages, cities, fields, homes and in prison and camps. A certain form, however, had to be observed because of the Germans. Therefore three types of special courts were established,[56] with identical abbreviated procedures and the same murderous results. Many Croat intellectuals, even those who

[55] In 1942, the priests and even the Head of the new Croat Orthodox Church, founded with the blessing of the new Croat State and Croat Catholic Church on April 3, 1941 (see *Narodne Novine,* April 7, 1942), were selected from among these Russian monks, who had found asylum in Srem.

[56] Special Court, Emergency Court, and Circuit Court—According to the Law on Defense of the State and the People, published in *Narodne Novine,* No. 53/1/-1941.

had once supported Dr. Macek in his politics, headed these pogrom courts. Among the criminal acts considered to be punishable by death were: high treason and any offense against national honor. These two laws did not specify the crimes in detail, and they were misused by the authorities and applied to minor infractions common to everyday life, and which in other countries would be punishable by reprimand or minor fines.

Other criminal acts were also punishable by death, such as: any kind of disapproval of or opposition to the state, by word, deed or mimicry, which cannot be found even in Hitler's or Stalin's murderous decrees. Furthermore, any dislike expressed about Croatia or its wartime allies (Germany, Italy or Japan); failure to report changes of address within three days; concealment or withholding of foodstuffs; failure to report the possession of gold or silver coins, foreign currency or certificates of value; any offense against a representative of public authority; listening to the BBC in London and having any kind of ties with Serbia. This meant that the Law on Criminal Acts comprised any minor infraction which any citizen was apt to commit any day, even the most obedient among them, and for which he was liable to a death sentence. But even if a person did not commit any of the infractions mentioned above, but was reported to have done so by any of the officials of the state or by religious dignitaries, he was nevertheless considered to be guilty. This meant that the law was a mere façade and that the Serbs and Jews were condemned to destruction in any event without hope of help from the Church of Archbishop Stepinac, which had identified itself with the State and because of which the shepherds of the soul were swimming in blood and besmirching their church robes.

The only salvation lay in the Protestant-Evangelical Church, which had 70,000 members among the local Germans in Croatia. But any Serb who joined that church to save his head, and Jews were forbidden even to do that, were later killed by the officials of the state, without intervention by the Croat Catholic Church. Moreover, this same Church obtained a decree from the State, forbidding other religions to accept Serbs as members, naturally exempting the Catholic Church. This caused the head of the Protestant-Evangelical Church of Croatia, Dr. Filip Popa (Popp), to protest most energetically "against this law which forbade the Serbs of Orthodox religion to convert voluntarily to Protestant-

ism." [57] This protest on the part of the Protestant Church against the non-Christian activities of the Croat Catholic Church was followed by a protest against the State and against the Church by the Governor of the Vukovar District, a German by the name of Dr. Jacob Eliker. But Hitler's Envoy to Zagreb, Dr. Sigfried Kasche, intervened and informed the Yugoslav Germans (Volksdeutscher) "not to protest, because the Nazis knew what they were doing." "What the Nazis knew" was: let the Croats carry out the pogrom, i.e., let this vicious minority destroy the Serbs as well as the Jews in Srem, and we will then be able to move in more easily, destroy them, and the rich province of Srem will be open for German colonists, because this way would conform better to international law and the Hague Conventions.[58]

This is how even the last hope was eliminated for preventing the destruction and murderous crimes by the Ustashi in Srem, and from November 1941 to November 1942, the Volksdeutscher dropped their interference. The three different Courts, therefore, took over this peaceful and rich Serbian region. They rode over it like the horses of the Apocalypse, leaving destruction and death in their wake. Among the members of the Ustashi police, who accused all the prominent Serbs and those who refused to be converted (after taking away all their possessions), were people such as: Juca Rukavina, Branimir Djikovica, Otmar Silda, Eugene Djurica, Stjepan Blazekovic, Nikola Baranovic, Antun Odjenovic, Bozo Ponjevic, Marko Mesic, Antun Sumevic, Nikola Grubisic, Josip Balezic, Antun Bauer, William Hodina, etc. . . . The prominent judges were the infamuos terrorists: Victor Tomic, Dr. Ivan Vidnevic,[59] Ante Vikeria, Dr. Djura Vujica, Petar Gvozdic, Antun Matkovic, Dr. Branko Susic, Gustav Eerber, father and son, Anton Ilika, Andrija Krzmanovic, Ivekovic, Tomljenovic, Ferda Knez, Zdravko Jezic, Franja Brandl, Karl Helbih, Mata Ciprijanovic, Antun Bauer, etc. The public prosecutors and judges of the pogrom were Croats and Nazis in Srem, but the Croat terrorists were in the majority, while the Nazi Volksdeutscher were in the minority. There were also state

[57] This protest, published in No. 1640/41 on November 1941, brought these two churches into conflict.

[58] While the Croats believed that they were purging Srem of Serbs and Jews and were preparing it to become their own granary, the local Germans (Volksdeutscher) did not hide the fact that this was their promised land and that it belonged to no one else.

[59] A decree according to which this former Yugoslav Judge was appointed in that office exists. The decree was passed by Dr. Puk, Minister of Justice, No. 36863/41 of June 24, 1941.

officials, and the shepherds of the soul of the Croat Catholic Church, together with former Yugoslav judges, lawyers—one-time human beings who had become dreaded murderers.

This terrorist juridical minority in Srem began its work in Ruma, Stara Pazova, Vukovar, Mitrovica, Irig, ravaging all the towns and villages and spreading distress and terror throughout Srem, which had lost its rights. Trials before the Circuit Courts and the Emergency Courts lasted approximately two hours with fifty people being tried at the one time, without previous written accusation; and without counsel with the execution taking effect immediately after the trial. The first trial held in this manner was in Ruma on August 10, 1941, it prosecuted 109 persons and lasted only three hours. Of these 101 were sentenced to death and 8 condemned to imprisonment in camps, where death was even worse. These trial procedures set the example for all the rest of the trials which were held at that time and determined the fate of the miserable tortured people, among whom 21,597 were sent to death by the Croat-Nazi Emergency Court in Srem.[60]

After each execution taking place directly after the trial, public notices were posted, listing the names of those who were killed, thus inspiring fear in the very bones of those who still remained and forcing them to resort to the un-Christian act of forced conversion. These lists always carried the names of from 50 to 100 people, but in the common graves, dug by the sentenced individuals themselves, the number of people thrown into them exceeded the number of the people listed, since all those who died without trial and under torture in the camps were also included.[61]

Apart from the extermination by means of pogrom courts, murders were also committed in homes and in prisons. Five thousand Jews and about 15,000 Serbs shared this fate and were thrown into mass graves or into the Sava and Drava rivers, and sometimes in the Danube. In a single grave in Mitrovica, once called Sirmium, 2,800 victims, Serbs and Jews, were cast in as slaughtered hostages. The percentage of the people murdered at

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[60] Among the bones dug up in Srem, which were buried in common graves, there were 22,000 skeletons, of which: 14,500 men, 3,200 women, 1,200 old men and 1,100 children, mostly from two to three years old.

[61] In the book called *Statements on Crimes committed by the invaders and their aides in Vojvodina,* Vol. 2, Srem. Pam. I, Novi Sad, 1946, from 1941-1944, it is said that there were always about 10% more skeletons found in the open graves than shown on the lists.

the beginning was ten Serbs or Jews for one Croat, according to Mussolini's method, but later this was changed to one hundred to one, according to Hitler's vindicative method.[62] This, however, was not the end of it, and a decree was passed on Concentration Camps, affecting all the members of families of those who were absent, because the latter might be hiding in the woods, and according to this law members of the family were killed as substitutes, or because they had refused to be converted when asked to do so.

Hatred and sadism in the form of various tortures were prevalent and cannot be compared with atrocities committed even in the darkest medieval times. The means of torture were the following: red hot needles forced under the finger nails; red hot irons placed between the fingers and the toes; whipping by chains; plucking out eyes, mutilating various parts of the body; placing salt in open wounds; tightening chains around the forehead until the eyes popped out and the skull was fractured;[63] placing a person into a wire enclosure, called hedgehog;[64] confinement to rooms filled by blood to the ankles, etc. All these dreadful means of destroying people made it very difficult and almost impossible to escape from any of these camps, except by sheer miracle or cunning ruse.[65] The number of those who escaped reached a few hundred among the 350,000 who were mercilessly butchered in Croatian camps alone.

Many thousands of innocent people, mostly members of families of those who were accused and absent, were killed on the way from their homes to the camps. Thus, about 200 women suspects, together with their children, were sent from Gradina in Srem to the camp in Jasenovac. However, they never reached the camp as they were murdered on the way, and the graves were ploughed over so that the burial place could not be found. A second instance was a group of 319 women and children who were taken from Jamena and never reached the camp; they were also butchered on the way, but about eleven escaped. The heir to the old Croat aristocratic house, Baron Turkovic, Major of

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[62] See Law of October 2, 1941, published in *Narodne Novine*.

[63] The well-known Serb, Dr. Nikola Tomic, died in this manner.

[64] The well-known Croat, Dr. Oton Gavrancic died in one of those satanical contraptions. He was a lawyer who had dared raise his voice against the Pavelic-Stepinac slavery. This took place in the summer of 1941, at the same time when the last descendant of the Croat Ban and Poet, Dr. Zelimir Mazuranic, committed suicide, because he could "not live to see this shame."

[65] Soviet statistics show that about 5% of the people placed in Stalin's camps were able to save themselves, which means more than from the Catholic Ustashi camps.

the Croat Domobran Guard, arrested 335 women and children in Divos and Calmanci, because their men were absent or had escaped from their homes. These women were sent to Jasenovac, but were all murdered before they reached the camp, where they would have been killed anyway. From this group fourteen women are still alive, who saved themselves miraculously by running into the woods. Cases like this could be enumerated indefinitely, although Srem was limited before the pogrom to 465,000 souls of which there were 250,000 Serbs, 110,000 Germans and Hungarians, and about 100,000 Croats and 5,000 Jews. All those, who however had reached Jasenovac, found at its head a Catholic priest—Frankovite monk, and Colonel of the Ustashi State, Fra, Vjekoslav Filipovic-Majstorovic, or Fra-Demon,[66] who with many of his colleagues had blood up to their elbows. This picture of slavery illustrated by these criminal acts committed by the Independent State of Croatia and the insane Catholic Ustashi and their church, cannot be found in any other system in the world, be it Nazi, Fascist, Bolshevik or savage.

While the Yugoslav Nazis of German descent (Volksdeutscher) were afraid of uncertainties and of the future, the Croat Ustashi and Catholic clergy were not thinking of the future, because their hatred was stronger than fear or reason. They destroyed anything that was Serb or Jewish without mercy, i.e. if they could not lay hands on it for themselves. After destroying property, they destroyed lives, and with them churches and temples, and all cultural and educational institutions and monuments,[67] even Christian monasteries and Saints. They threw bombs into homes killing everyone in them. They threw bombs into churches and temples destroying everything. They butchered civilians, women and children, which was not always done even by the Nazis or Communists. This finally provoked another wave of revolt among the Nazis themselves. The point was reached, where the Germans had to give an ultimatum to the Croats under threat of armed force.

Thus the Ustashi-Nazi condominium in Srem ended in

[66] See V. Novak, *op. cit.*, pp. 645-651, 718, 777, 682, 861, 871 for information on this Archbishop Stepinac's priest and other priests with him, as well as the camp of Jasenovac.

[67] The Hague Conventions passed articles 46, 50, 52, 56 just for those very crimes mentioned above, which proceeded according to a planned program during the entire time of the Ustashi Government. The Germans were the first to think about the violation of those articles and, afraid for themselves, tried to shake off the blame, but unfortunately for them too late.

September 1942, and the Germans took over the administration of this Serbian region from the Croats.[68] They kept the Emergency Courts and all other Nazi laws, but without forced conversion, without extermination by pogrom, without bombs and axes, without murdering women and children, as if they all of a sudden began thinking of the consequences of genocide and the Hague Conventions. Serbs were tried (there were no more Jews left) in cases where they had any connection with the underground, but the Germans also cut off the heads of many Ustashi murderers and leaders of the pogrom, and among them the chief of the Ustashi shepherds of the soul and Stepinac's priest, Mata Gavranovic. They were too much even for the German-Nazis, and were killed because of the crimes they had committed.

The rivalry in the performance of crimes between the true German Nazis and their Croat bastards, in that flat and fertile region of Srem, came to an end after 16 months with the result that the bastards were fiercer and more bloodthirsty than their parents and teachers.

"CARITAS" AND THE CATHOLICIZATION OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX AND MOSLEM CHILDREN

The Ustashi, in the fury of their extermination program, were at first ignorant of the fact that there existed in the Serbian Orthodox population an element easily capable of being converted to Catholicism—the Serbian children whose parents had been killed during the punishment raids or in the concentration camps. These were the "chicks" to whom Brother Dionis Juricev, the Head of the Religious Department, had referred to while boasting of machine-gunning them along with the adults, and whose frail bodies were used to feed the fires of the crematory ovens of Jasenovac. At length, however, Pavelic's government, in agreement with the ecclesiastical authorities, felt that it would be more advantageous to stop the "massacre of the innocent" and incorporate them in the Catholic Croatian population, after indoctrinating them with an appropriate education. A benevolent society, called "Caritas," with His Grace Stepinac as President, took charge of this affair, which turned out to be at

[68] When the Croat management ceased in Srem in September 1941, and the Germans came instead, there was not a single Serbian Church or Jewish temple, not a single cemetery that had not been destroyed or demolished, not a single home that had not been burned, there remained not a single family which was not in mourning.

the same time, both edifying and patriotic, and the Sisters themselves took part in rounding them up.

"This was a very astute calculation, for the war being finished, many children had been unable to find the members of the family who had escaped, and also because many of them had been too young when taken into 'Caritas' to remember either their origin, their village, or even their names."[69]

Even today one can read notices, such as the following, which appeared in the Yugoslav paper, *Politika,* under the heading, "Searching for relatives":

"My whole family was imprisoned in camp at Stara Gradiska. We were separated from our parents and sent off on a transport train. Before leaving, a man told me to bring my little sister, who was only three, to the office. She was taken away by two nuns and I never saw her again. If anyone can give me information please write to Vaso Radovanovic, architect, Gaglin." (*Politika,* April 16, 1957).

A farmer, Stojan Marjanovic (6 Narodne Revolucije, at Curug) wrote:

"During the war I was a prisoner, I left my wife and little boy in the village of Rogolji, district of Bosanska Gradiska. Both were taken to a concentration camp, first at Sisak, and then Jasenovac. At the time my son was four and was separated from his mother in the camp. I learned that someone from Sremska Mitrovica adopted him. The child probably does not remember his name. The only way he can be recognized is by a scar from a burn on his neck. . . ." (*Politika,* December 3, 1956).

"A mother, Stana Dzakula, is searching for her son, born August 8, 1930, in the village of Derezi. In 1942 he was taken with a group of children to the Ustashi concentration camp at Stara Gradiska. Since that time all trace of him has been lost. The child has a birth mark under his left eye." (*Politika,* February 24, 1958).

"The Ustashi took Madame Stana Kukavica, district of Bosanska Dubica, of Skljucani to the concentration camp at Stara Gradiska with her sons Milan, age 14, and Bosko, age 12. The children were separated from their mother and since then she has lost all trace of them. Milan had six toes on one of his feet." (*Politika,* December 19, 1957).

From Milan Kevic (42 Nemanjina, Belgrade) was this notice:

[69] Herve Lauriere, *op. cit.,* p. 157.

"In June, 1942, the Ustashi took my mother (born at Milosevo Brdo, district of Bosanska Gradiska) to the concentration camp at Jasenovac with my four sisters: Milka (22), Jovanka (18), Stanojka (5), and Draginja (1½). My brother Dusan and I were sent to the concentration camp at Jastrabarsko, where we were liberated—. We have never had news of our mother and sisters." (*Politika,* April 16, 1957).

From Milka Letic of Glina: "In July, 1942, the Ustashi imprisoned me with my small daughter of eight and my son, Miodrag, of four, in the camp of Velika Gradiska. A few days afterward an Ustashi took away my son with Marko Badric's daughter from Glina, saying that he was adopting them. Soon after, I was sent to hard labor in Germany and my daughter remained in the camp. After the war I joined my daughter but my son is nowhere to be found." (*Politika,* April 16, 1957).

Countless young boys and girls are now living as good Catholics in total ignorance of their past and their origin. If, as the Croatian episcopacy has testified, the "Caritas" had no other aim but to save children, why were these led away under such conditions without any care taken of their identity so that they could not find their families later on? This question was raised by Omer Kajmakovic, the former Moslem deputy from Bosnia: "We Moslems also have to settle accounts with His Grace Stepinac. May I ask: what became of the hundreds of Moslem children whose parents perished in western Bosnia? The Catholic Sisters picked up about 350 Moslem children and put them in the convents. I therefore ask His Grace Stepinac, who has been blessed by Pope Pius XII, where at present, are the young boys who belong to the Islamic religion and who used to turn toward Mecca and Medina while saying the prayers of the Koran? In what seminaries, what convents or congregations can these boys be found, some of whom are now wearing the robes of theological students?" [70]

It was quite true. Numbers of the Serbian Orthodox and Moslem children were taken abroad by the Ustashi and the Croatian clergy. The greater part were registered in the theological faculties in Italy, Argentina, Australia and the United States. The Croatian Franciscans, after the debacle, took fourteen boys with them to the U.S.A., and they can now be found in St. Joseph's seminary, Westmont, Illinois. Nearly all these youths

[70] Omer Kajmakovic, "Vatican," *Voice of Canadian Serbs,* January 29, 1953.

bear their Serbian baptismal names, and Serbian circles in the U.S.A. think that these children were kidnapped by the Ustashi and by Croatian priests.

Mrs. Manda Mrksic, of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, sent a letter to the Croatian Franciscans (4851 Drexell Blvd., Chicago, Ill.), asking them to give her detailed information concerning the seminarists for which material aid is requested, and also the names of the parents and dates of birth. However, she has never received any reply to these specific questions.

A printed propaganda brochure in Rome (1951), entitled, "*His Grace Aloysius Stepinac,* maintains the same silence on this subject. It pays tribute to the activities of the "Caritas" while attempting the incredible feat of concealing its collaboration with the Ustashi. If it were praiseworthy to save the Serbian children (even for the purpose of converting them), the first duty would have been to refuse any moral help to those who made orphans of them.

THE COLLABORATION OF HIS GRACE STEPINAC

With rare impudence, an effort was made to prove that the Archbishop of Zagreb rose up against the crimes committed under the Pavelic regime. But it suffices to check the dates in order to establish the facts.

It was only at the end of 1943, when Cardinal Spellman informed the Holy See that the Nazi's were losing the war, that His Grace Stepinac tried, in certain ways, to guarantee a future which had already been compromised by the Ustashi hunting slate that had listed thousands of Serbian Orthodox and Jewish martyrs; thousands of Moslems, and even a few thousand Catholics who had dared rise up in protest against the terror and the crimes.

His Grace Stepinac formulated his first criticism, in the Cathedral of Zagreb in 1943, against the German practice of collective punishment in reprisal for acts of sabotage by the resistance forces after Italy's capitulation, when the debacle of the Axis powers was already foreseen. He was criticized for his discourse by the Nazi paper, *Volkischer Beobachter,* and by the Ustashi, *Hrvatski Narod.*

At this time, His Grace Stepinac was also influenced by an event which affected his family. His own brother, accused of having helped the partisans of Tito, was shot down by the

Ustashi. Although the Archbishop was not on good terms with the deceased, His Grace was profoundly shocked and protested violently against what his Ustashi friends had done. Moreover, it is possible that the radio of the partisans jumped at the occasion to spread their propaganda to the best advantage, in rallying the Croatian Catholics to the cause of the resistance.

The above-mentioned apologetic brochure published the text of a letter that His Grace Stepinac had written in 1943 to someone whose name is not known, and in which he exposed the pretended appeals to Pavelic and the Ustashi authorities in favor of certain "individuals" or "communities." Such references are indeed vague.

Therefore, on reading this letter, one is bewildered on coming across such a paragraph as: "No sensible person could possibly say that the Archbishop of Zagreb, representing the Church, went back on his principles, or failed to say publicly, or not to say, all that was on his mind." [71]

To us, it seems that "no sensible person" could ever forget all the praises sung, all the Te Deums and superlative words of approval, all the boundless promises of loyalty to the bloodthirsty Poglavnik.

It is true that further on in this letter, which one would prefer to consider apocryphal, was the following corrective phrase which saves the honor of the pretended signer of this missive: "Whosoever understands the significance of all the events and circumstances also knows that it meant risking one's life to acknowledge them openly." [72]

The person who wrote these lines, whoever it was, attempted to convince his readers that His Grace Stepinac had risked his life trying to defend the Serbs and Jews in other ways than by the tactful "interventions," which he prided himself on or which are credited to him. His excuse was already very slim. But who would have dared defy the first prelate of Croatia, President of the Catholic Action with all of its affiliations, and who controlled a powerful press, and was also a noted member of the Diet, surrounded during the sessions by the Bishop and nine other ecclesiastics? Such an eventuality was absurdly impossible.

Moreover, His Grace Stepinac was not in the least intimated in March 1945 when he addressed Casertano, the Italian Minister at Zagreb, in the following terms:

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[71] *Mgr. Aloysius Stepinac* (Rome: Societa Graphica Romana, 1951), p. 6.
[72] *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

"I protest, from the bottom of my heart, against the ignominious acts committed by the Italian troops to the populations in the districts of Krasic, Vivodina and Vrhovac, where several villages were destroyed by fire."

It can be seen that the Archbishop of Zagreb was not lacking in apostolic courage on this occasion, to defend the Catholic populations, but they were the only ones, and he was not afraid of taking it out on Fascist Italy, paramount to Pavelic's puppet state. Furthermore, if His Grace Stepinac had had the slightest intention of making known, abroad at least, "what was on his mind" in regard to the crimes of the executioners before which his episcopacy had bowed, as has been shown, there were many ways for him to do so. He made use of one way, however, but with an entirely different intention, when he sent a member of his intimate circle, Rev. Augustin Juretic, councillor of the episcopal conferences and member of the commission for the conversion of the Serbian Orthodox, on a special mission to Fribourg, in Switzerland. His Grace Stepinac sent a report on the Ustashi atrocities by his emissary. These were copious reports (the subject matter was far from limited), illustrated with frightful pictures, in which the two chums ascribed to the Chetniks and Partisans all the atrocities committed by the Ustashi against the Serbian people and representing them as the crimes against the "Croatian people." All this macabre documentation was communicated by Juretic to the foreign press and even sent to Roosevelt and Churchill. It would be superfluous to add that the sojourn of the special envoy was made at the expense of the Zagreb government.

Stepinac, not being satisfied only with his visits to Rome *a limine,* in order to uphold Pavelic's regime, sent a memorandum, on May 18, 1943, to Pope Pius XII in which he stressed the merits of the Ustashi government concerning the plan of the massive conversions of the Orthodox to Catholicism in an effort to strengthen the foundations of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, he emphasized the fact that the loss of the Croatian satellite state would also mean the loss of new members, that is, the newly converted Catholics, "improvised Catholics," as the French author, Jean Hussard, calls them.

In this memorandum he wrote:

> The schism in the Orient, while swelling the ranks of the Catholics, might mean aiming toward an obscure goal. The victory of pan-Serb

ideology would mean the destruction of Catholicism in the northwest region of the Balkans, that is in the Croatian state. Of this there is not the slightest doubt. Moreover, it is evident that such a fatal event would have consequences beyond the Croatian frontier. The waves of an Orthodox and Byzantine offensive would spread to the Italian coastline, whereas, for the time being, they break only against the advanced fortress of Croatia (antemurale christianitatis).

Thanks to the mission of the Croatian clergy, and above all, the Franciscans, foundations for a renovated Catholicism in Bulgaria have been laid, the remainder of those faithful to our cult in Albania of Skenderbeg have been saved. The destruction of a Catholic nation in the Balkans would affect various settlements dispersed in the agitated Orthodox and Islamic Balkans.

Holy Father, all humanity, among which are thousands with bleeding wounds, is turning to Thee, whose very name signifies the celestial peace so needed by the suffering of mankind. In bringing peace to the world, Holy Father, turn toward the Croatian people who have always remained loyal to Christ and to Thee. The young Croatian state, born under more difficult and terrible conditions than any state for the past centuries, and struggling desperately for its own survival, has given proof on every occasion of its will to remain loyal to its Catholic traditions and to assure a brighter and better future for the Catholic Church in this part of the world. On the other hand, thousands of followers and Croatian priests would willingly sacrifice their own lives rather than risk the loss or weakening of the state. The 240,000 of those converted from Serbian Orthodox to Catholicism would not be the only loss, but also the entire Catholic population of this region, with all the churches and monasteries.

If the Lord does not decide otherwise, the progress of Catholicism will remain closely and naturally bound to the prosperity of the Croatian state. Their salvation is mutual. Holy Father, we sincerely believe in mercy and in the divine justice of which you are the instrument. I commend our Independent Croatian state to thy paternal care and to thy prayers, confident that in so doing I am, at the same time upholding the holy religion in my state and in the Balkans.[73]

It is unnecessary to make any analysis of this letter, which speaks for itself. However, it should be pointed out that Stepinac confesses that 240,000 Serbs had been converted to Catholicism and that he considered the Ustashi state a springboard for an offensive and for the expansion of Catholicism and Croatianism in the Balkans.

Concerning this letter the *Osservatore Romano* published the following statement on October 10, 1946:

In a session of the Zagreb trial on October 2nd the Public Prosecutor produced against Archibishop Stepinac the Croat translation

[73] Novak, *Magnum Crimen,* pp. 788-789.

> of a letter that the Archbishop is alleged to have sent to the Holy See under the date of May 18th, 1943.
>
> We are authorized to declare that, after an investigation in the archives of the Papal Secretariate of state, only a few papers were discovered bearing the date of May 18th, 1943, the contents of which correspond only in part to the summary given out by the Public Prosecutor.
>
> Moreover, in contrast with all the letters sent by the Archbishop to the Holy See, the alleged document—to which no reference was ever made thereafter—is typewritten on paper without a printed letter-head; it is written in a form not employed in correspondence with the Holy See; it is without the Archbishop's seal; and, what is more significant, it is without signature.[74]

This clarification from the Vatican, or rather its denial that a letter with such contents existed, did not escape criticism, for the representative of the Ustashi government at Rome, Erwein Lobkowicz, in his report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on June 10th, 1943, had referred to His Grace Stepinac's letter. In this report he recalled, at the same time, that Stepinac's visited Mgr. Marcone, legate of the Pope at Zagreb, and had also made a visit to Rome. And it was Marcone who had confided that "His Grace Stepinac had emphatically informed the Vatican about Croatia." According to Stepinac it appears that the Vatican looked more and more favorably on Croatia and that Stepinac had been advised to maintain a cordial relationship with Croatian officials.

Lobkowicz emphasized in his report that:

> The Vatican had been delighted with the visit of His Grace Stepinac, who also had been most satisfied with the welcome he had received. According to his own statement, and also from various sources, it seems that the Archbishop had given the Vatican a clear account of the situation in Croatia. He had hinted that he did not entirely approve of all that was going on, but had remained reticent in order to give a more favorable impression of Croatia. The Archbishop had put great stress on the laws regulating abortions, which had been favorably recognized by the Vatican. Thus it was that the Archbishop, on the basis of these laws, partially justified the treatment of the Jews who, in our country, had been the most fervent partisans and who had practiced, very frequently, crimes of this sort, which meant, of course, abortions.[75]

[74] Michael Derrick, *Tito and the Catholic Church* (London, 1953), p. 27.

[75] Erwein Lobkowicz: Report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Zagreb, June 10, 1943. See photocopy supplement of *Tajni Dokumenti*. It is easy to understand why, under these conditions, His Grace Stepinac, at the time of his trial in 1945, preferred not to mention his behavior during the bloody years of the Ustashi regime. How could he have possibly defended himself against so many overwhelming proofs? He therefore considered it more convenient to say: "I can answer to all accusations heaped upon me that I have a perfectly clear conscience."

One might conclude that his attitude toward the Ustashi could be naturally explained by the respect he felt he owed to the established government, according to the adage of "giving unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar." He therefore refused the judges' right to demand that he give an account of himself. And thus he got off with a bow. These proceedings were played up in the Catholic press almost everywhere, but, above all, far away from the scene where the drama had been enacted during a period of four years, and far from the witnesses who had closely followed all the various phases. The greater the distance, the more easily public opinion could be misled. Thus could be read, among many others, an article by P. Alessandrini, editor of *Osservatore Romano,* the official organ of the Holy See, which emphasized the fact that the Metropolitan of Croatia, His Grace Stepinác, had had only "protocol contacts" with the authorities, "in order to defend the Catholic faith and all his flock during the tragic hours." [76]

To the editor of this copious paper, all the speeches overflowing with praise for the Poglavnik, all the sermons where he was seen veiled in incense like a saint, all the delirious articles published by the clerical press, all the banquets where the Ustashi and the ecclesiastics gathered together like brothers and all the participation by priests in the administration and in the police force, while preaching in favor of the massacre of the Serbs or marching at the head of the slaughterers—all these acts were considered "protocol contacts." And what was the motive for these "contacts"? Simply "to defend the Catholic faith," which no one ever thought of attacking? Far from it! This faith had been imposed by force, torture, terror and the assassination of hundreds of thousands of unfortunate victims. These victims were the ones, and for them alone were the "hours" really "tragic."

However, if the Archbishop of Zagreb, at the moment of his trial, realized that he was criticized for his cautious silence concerning all that went on, he had not previously been conscious of this fact. In the autumn of 1943, for instance, he had not disdained *pleading pro domo suo,* before a docile audience. According to instructions from Rome, public prayers for peace were being said at Zagreb, and on October 31, the day consecrated to Christ-the-King, His Grace Stepinac, after having led

[76] Quoted in *Le Monde,* July 3, 1953.

the procession, gave a sermon containing the following passages:

> This procession gives me the opportunity of speaking publicly to the innumerable councillors that they may advise the representatives of the Catholic Church to take the necessary steps so that the responsibility for the evils that have been or are still being committed, are not blamed upon the Church.
>
> There are people who accuse us of not rising up in time, or not have taken efficacious action against the crimes committed in the different regions of our country. Our reply is that we are not, and do not wish to be the political instrument of anyone, no matter who, an instrument that adjusts itself to all momentary demands and needs of political persons or political parties. In public life we have always emphasized the principles of the eternal and divine law. We cannot sound the alarm or physically force any person, whoever he may be, to respect the divine laws, for every man is endowed with his own free will, and alone is responsible for his acts. It is for this reason that we cannot be held responsible for some of the dare-devil fanatics in the ecclesiastical ranks.[77]

It is not known whether the "innumerable councillors," here and there, were convinced by this casuistry, but we find it completely absurd. Condemning atrocious crimes which took place before his very eyes, and under a religious pretext, seemed to the Archbishop like serving as a "political instrument." From his standpoint, eternal justice, Christian charity, moral and humanistic feelings were not involved. Consequently, he was unable to sound the alarm. And yet "everyone is responsible for his own acts." Like Pontius Pilate, in the days of old, he refused to do anything about it.

But the most incredible of all was his allusion to the priests and the Franciscan slaughterers who preached in favor of the massacres, and whom he called "dare-devil fanatics." This was the expression His Grace had used in alluding to them, and he considered that their acts did not, in the least, involve the responsibility of the first prelate of Croatia.

It was quite clear that the Archbishop of Zagreb, while trying to justify his attitude, acknowledged the fact that he had never "sounded the alarm" and that he never openly condemned the crimes.

The speech of October 31, 1943, was the first and last, actually the only one, which had ever mentioned the tragedy of the Serbs and Jews in his Independent State of Croatia. He states in it "that the church does not agree with the injustices com-

[77] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 1028.

mitted against the Jews and the Serbs," regardless of the fact that those were not just "mere injustices," but acts of genocide, plunder, torture, extermination by means of sword and fire, and in a single word, a pogrom organized by the state and perpetrated by the state and by the Church. While there is not a single word more about the Jews, he spoke further about the Serbs, giving some sort of a story in connection with them, by means of which he actually proved his anti-Christian hatred and incomprehensible lethargy toward the dreadful bloodshed which took place before his eyes, in which children and women, the most innocent among them, suffered most. He went on looking at those terrors of bloodshed for over two years, without a word of reproof, and only in 1943, thirty-one months later, he explained that the reason he did not do anything about it was because he did not want to become "anybody's political instrument." What cynicism from a High Ecclesiastic Prelate! Whose "political" instrument would he have been if he had raised his voice against the slaughter of the innocent?

The story referred to above, undignified for the highest ranking Prelate of Croatia and future Cardinal, and which could be only applied to an Ustashi lord and protector, which name was actually given him in the Croat Newspapers, i.e., the First Lord of the Kingdom (of Ante Pavelic, Hitler and Mussolini), goes on like this:

A certain writer tells that some peasant was bringing every day to the baker in town five pounds of butter for five pounds of bread. On a certain day the baker found out that the peasant had brought him only four and a half pounds of butter, and asked him for an explanation the next time he came. The peasant answered him in a dignified manner: "It is not my fault, dear friend. At home I have only the scales but not the weights. Therefore, each time I weigh the butter, I place your bread on one side and my butter on the other side, and bring as much butter as the bread weighs." After finishing his story, Stepinac said: "The story of the peasant and the baker applies to you." The motto or the gist of the story should be that Stepinac was accusing the Serbs for being murdered, because according to his reasoning the peasant represents Croatia and the baker represents Serbia. The story implies that the Croats were only defending themselves and that this "defense," blessed by Stepinac and the Ustashi, will last as long as they do not stifle the last breath out of the schismatic Serb living on Pavelic's criminal territory of

Croatia—this monstrous creation of Hitler and Mussolini—and blessed by Pope Pius XII, to the profound regret of the great French Catholic prelate, Cardinal Tisserant.

This provocative story which Stepinac has told us differs only in form from the stories of his priests, according to whom the sins of all those who have killed the Serbs and Jews are absolved. Stepinac's story inspired one of the priests and Croat writer, Dr. Milan Dobrovoljac, who left the Catholic Church and became converted to the Old Catholic religion, to write a tragic and sad poem about Stepinac and his story, about the Holy Altar, his benedictions of the Ustashi pogrom, and his protection of all kinds of crimes, committed by his shepherds of the soul in homes, villages, cities, camps. This poem is long but very appropriate, and the crimes in it are depicted in their full macabre terror, which are proved to be true, because the author, former national deputy of Croatia, and Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Stepinac's once-upon-a-time personal friend and Catholic priest,[78] was their witness.

This was a flagrant betrayal of his incense-bearers, such as Mr. Alessandrini, who wrote in his article cited above: "His Grace Stepinac spoke lucidly and firmly against all the arbitrary activities, all the violence, and Ustashi abuses." [79]

In reality, when this pretended "martyr of calumny" spoke "lucidly and firmly," it was only to give all the support he could to his precious regime. And the turn of events, from day to day, foretold the end of this regime, which only strengthened his ardor. In June 1944, during a religious ceremony at Marija Bistrica (the Croatian Lourdes), he declared that the Ustashi state would be saved by the intercession of the Holy Virgin. Shortly afterward, on July 7th, he said in his sermon: "The Croatian people are shedding their blood for the state and they will preserve and save the state. Any act directed against the people and Croatian independence should never wipe out individual courage. On the contrary, we should each contribute an ever-increasing strength in building and defending the state." [80]

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[78] Dr. Milan Dobrovoljac Psunjski, *Croats in the Light of Historical Truth* (Belgrade, 1944), pp. 233-235. The above-mentioned poem was written by Dobrovoljac after Stepinac's speech in 1943, and thus unmasked Stepinac for the first time and showed him to the people for what he was.

[79] *Le Monde,* July 3, 1953.

[80] Fiorello Cavalli, Il processo dell' arcivescovo di Zagabria, Roma, *La Civilta Cattolica,* p. 77.

Hrvatski Narod, the Ustashi Headquarters' official organ, published this sermon on the first page, accompanied by a picture of the Archbishop standing beside the Poglavnik. (It was taken when the Te Deum was being sung at the opening session of the Diet). His Grace Stepinac was honored by the title of "First Lord of the Kingdom." He was compared with the prelates who led the procession of Croatian kings during the middle ages. On this occasion it was none other than Pavelic who was the king.

There were enthusiastic commentaries such as the following: "Thus the Catholic Church, in Croatia, through the words of its prelate, in the name of human and divine rights, has taken a new place in the heroic and tragic struggle of the Croatian people for independent statehood. . . . Although this was not the first time that His Grace Stepinac, as well as the Archbishop of Sarajevo, the Bishop of Split and other bishops had taken the same position, this attitude of His Grace Stepinac was of special significance, because it was adopted at a time when the war was entering on its final and critical phase." [81]

The sermon was broadcast over the radio, carried by the Catholic and Ustashi press and by the Nazi agency, DNB.

The BBC, in London, replied in these terms:

> The Germans, alone, and their servants maintain that the Allies committed atrocities. Only the Ustashi can affirm that the Croatian people, under their regime, defended liberty and independence. The agency of the Hitlerian press ascribed to Archbishop Stepinac such a violent declaration that it was hoped that he would eventually contradict it. By refusing to do so, it will be obvious that Archbishop Stepinac had quite publicly added his name to the list of German and Ustashi protectors. . . . But, of course, there was no contradiction and today, in reading over the papers of the Vatican, asserting that the "First Lord of the Kingdom" had never been pro-Ustashi, one can hardly restrain a smile of irony.

THE CASE OF STEPINAC

The Archbishop of Zagreb must have been the prey of a deep inner struggle. This we should not underestimate, even while recalling to memory the protestation he made before the court: "My conscience is clear. I never betrayed my country."

Just what did His Grace Stepinac consider his country? Certainly not Yugoslavia! But exclusively Croatia. And why?

[81] *Hrvatski Narod* (Zagreb), July 23, 1944.

Simply because the Croatians stem from the Roman Catholic faith, while Serbia, on the contrary, follows the Eastern Orthodox religion.

Yet the two peoples, federated now for thirty-five years, form only one state. To try and break its unity was, from a national Yugoslav point of view, like committing an act of high treason.

That was the unpardonable crime. If there is anyone who doubts he need only refer to the following data:

Even before the war the Archbishop of Zagreb had turned his palace into a refuge for the Separatists and the Ustashi.

As the newspaper *Hrvatski Narod* specified, he had upheld the terrorist, Zupancic, and violated the canonical texts and penal law.

On April 28, 1941, he had, by a pastoral letter to the clergy of his diocese, appealed to all the priests to rally around the Independent State of Croatia.

In the month of December of this same year he sent the Yugoslav workers, in Germany, a Christmas message exhorting them to continue work, persuading them that it was their duty.

He upheld the sinister Ante Pavelic who ordered the assassination of King Alexander and Louis Barthou.

On February 23, 1942, he bestowed his blessing on the Ustashi parliament, founded by this culprit.

It is also true that he made no effort to stop the atrocities his dear Croatians were committing, by the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, causing them to perish in the concentration camps of Jasenovac, Jaski, Gradiska and other places of torture.

He had also approved the procedure of forcing conversions on the unfortunate Orthodox, who had no other alternative but abjure their faith.

Even after Germany had fallen, on March 24th, 1945, he issued a manifesto in favor of the Ustashi state.

At this period he offered refuge, in the Archbishopric, to the numerous political murderers hounded by the police.

A large part of the gold which had been shorn from the victims was found in the cellars of the churches and even cached beneath the altar of a Franciscan monastery.

The above facts suffice. Further details of the evidence of his guilt would be superfluous. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in 1946, His Grace Stepinac found himself sentenced to sixteen years of hard labor.[82]

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[82] From article by Henry Benazet in *L'Aurore* (Paris), March 12, 1953.

In writing about the Stepinac trial, Mathew Spinka concludes:

> It is still impossible to feel wholly confident in passing judgment on the merits of the trial. But the available information is sufficient to show clearly that the archbishop did collaborate with the Pavelic regime, although the procedure adopted by the court was not fair according to democratic standards. That, however, does not prove that Stepinac or his fellow defendants were not guilty, either wholly or in part, of the charges.[83]

Catholic propaganda has insisted that Stepinac was put in prison for his anti-Communist activities. Without in any way defending Communist justice, the writer is obliged to state for the record and emphasize that Stepinac was really tried for his collaboration with Ustashi and Nazis during the war. It is also interesting to note that several high Orthodox churchmen were tried in Yugoslavia precisely for anti-Communist activities, and little or no protest has been heard from the West, and least of all from Catholic circles. Among high Orthodox churchmen who were so imprisoned are Josip (Bishop of Skoplje), Nastic (Bishop of Sarajevo), Irinej Ciric (Bishop of Novi Sad) Arsenije (Bishop of Montenegro) and Nekratije Krulj (Metropolitan of Sarajevo).

Referring to the independence and liberty that Pavelic brought to the Croatian people, French Cardinal Tisserant, during an interview with Nikola Rusinovic, the Ustashi representative at the Vatican, stated: "Your Fascist friends are not in the least interested in your independence and your liberty, nor in the existence of the Croatian state. I often listen to what their most important political leaders have to say." [84]

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[83] In Robert J. Kerner, Ed., *Yugoslavia,* Berkeley, California, 1949, p. 259.
[84] Official report (March 6, 1942) cited in *Tajni Dokumenti,* p. 135.

Chapter VIII

Final Attempt to Save the Monster

AT THE BEGINNING of the summer of 1944 the dawn of liberty was rising in all parts of the world. But the Ustashi government decided to carry on the crimes until the very end, while increasing the brutality. The newspaper, *Hrvatski Narod,* wrote: "Our people have declared war on the Serbs. This means death or total expulsion from Bosnia-Herzegovina." [1]

In the village of Prijane, district of Glamoc, the Ustashi broke into Pero Cvekic's house where there were 36 in the family. Thirty-three happened to be at home. Every one of them was massacred. A few who were in the hay loft were burned alive.[2]

In the village of Halapic, also in the district of Glamoc, the Ustashi arrested 137 people one day, most of them women and children. Thirty-seven were burned alive in Ostoja Loncar's store, while the others had their throats cut.[3]

In the village of Dubrave the Ustashi massacred 45 families. The ocular witness who saw the massacres was Petar Guzijan, now living in Gary, Indiana.[4]

One day the Ustashi came to the village of Debeljak. They raped five girls between the ages of 13 and 15 in Radoje Krstan's house. A neighbor, Stevanija Stanivuk, who happened to be in the house, was killed because she tried to ward off the aggressors. The witness, Milan Stanivuk, who was hidden in the house, is now living in Gary, Indiana.[5]

In the village of Podgreda, the Ustashi gathered 120 people together, among whom was Jovo Cvekic's son, a baby only three days old. This infant and Anica Krisic's newborn child, were closed up in the house and burned alive. The witness of this crime is Ilija Krasic, now living in Gary, Indiana.[6]

At Travnik, Hazim Satric was Chief of the Ustashi police. He liquidated many Serbs, among whom was Dr. Jajcanin,

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[1] *Hrvatski Narod,* July 4, 1944.
[2] Testimonies collected by Dobrijevic and published in *American Srbobran,* July 8, 1952.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*

Mahmud Robovic, a journalist, and Stanko Turudija. The son of the latter was stabbed on his father's chest.

After the massacre at Travnik, Satric was assigned to a higher position by Andrija Artukovic, at Banja Luka, with Viktor Gutic, where he distinguished himself by his cruelty in committing the innumerable crimes, some of which have already been cited. Since in 1944 the region was lacking in salt, he took advantage of the situation and distributed salt to the population at the price of "two pounds of salt for every ear of a Serb."

And thus the wave of terror swept over the whole of satellite Croatia.

The Catholic newspapers went to the Poglavnik's rescue, and redoubled their appeals to the population so that it would make every effort to defend satellite Croatia. "Now we are making the greatest, the most urgent, and the most difficult demand, that of helping the nation to emerge from its traditional opposition by entering into an active collaboration with the authorities." [7]

The Franciscan, Krsto Krizanic, in making a similar appeal to the Croatian intellectuals for the defense and the consolidation of the Ustashi state said: "Croatian intellectuals should be constructive and positive in all that concerns the state. They should look with disdain upon the heritage of our past, such as passive contemplation, listless expectancy and destructive opposition to our welfare which resides in the safeguarding of our state for the well-being of every Croatian, and, above all, for the intellectuals. . . . Individually the Ustashi may have their faults, but their greatest merit lies in their sacrifices for the founding of a new Croatian state. Just because of their minor faults it would be sheer madness not to acknowledge their fundamental and vital success, the Croatian state." [8]

Calling the ferocious bestiality of the Ustashi assassins "minor faults" and merely "individual" was, indeed, a pleasing euphemism, which corresponds to the one used by His Grace Stepinac when he referred to the "dare-devil fanatics belonging to the ecclesiastical ranks." But the most remarkable of all was this first allusion to the Croatian Catholic hierarchy trying to free their compatriots from the systematic opposition they had been practicing for centuries, a reflection which has been noted

[7] *Katolicki List,* July 13, 1944.
[8] *Hrvatski Narod,* January 6, 1945.

in this volume. Only Pavelic and his henchmen, financed by Fascist Italy, were judged worthy of such a complete change of attitude.

Early in 1944 Pavelic's War Ministry issued a special prayer book for soldiers, entitled "The Croatian Soldier." The book was prepared by the priest, Vilim Cecelja, Stepinac's deputy in the army vicariate, and was issued with permission of the Archbishopric Spiritual Board in Zagreb.

The Spiritual Board, at that time, was composed of the following members: Archbishop Stepinac, and Bishops Dr. Salis Sevis, Dr. Josip Lah, Ignacije Rodic and Valentin Malek. The prayer book is full of pleas to God on behalf of Pavelic, the Independent State of Croatia and the Ustashi. In one of these, the priest asks for blessings of the Ustashi, or the Domobranci (National Guard Home Defense), on the occasion of their taking an oath of loyalty to Pavelic. This blessing reads: "Almighty and immortal God, Father of strength and mercy, Thou who will not allow anyone who believes in Thee to fail, turn thy mercy, Father, to Thy children, the Croatian Ustashi and Domobranci, who today take an oath of allegiance to their country and to their chieftain. Help them, God, in Thy mercy, to accept with all their hearts and souls the words they pronounce, so that they will be ready to give everything for the Croatian fatherland and for the Chieftain, even their lives. Thus may the blessings of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost be upon you and stay with you always. Amen." [9]

After Italy's capitulation, the Pavelic regime was on its way toward the debacle. Confusion and complete demoralization overcame Croatia, even before Germany's obvious defeat. Certain Ustashi circles tried to make the best of the situation. At the beginning of September 1944, the Minister of National Defense, Vokic, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mladen Lorkovic, organized a revolt at the Palace to overthrow Pavelic. But the conspiracy failed and the two accomplices were shot.

This sounded the alarm of the approaching debacle of the satellite state of Croatia. Pavelic tried to escape by committing an act of treason and by stabbing those in the back who had put him in power. In November he sent a memorandum by one of his agents to General Sir Henry Maitland, Chief Allied Commander of the Mediterranean at Caserta, a memorandum in

[9] Horvat and Stambuk, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

which he called attention to the "political rights and aspirations of Croatia" and proposed that he join the Allies with his army in the fight against Germany.

As indicated earlier, the Catholic clergy continued to offer full support to the dying regime, the support which Pavelic had acknowleged with gratitude by decorating His Grace Stepinac in 1944 with the "Large Cross with a Star." [10] Consequently, when Germany's defeat became imminent, the Poglavnik decided to make one final effort to save the "Independent State" and his own personal situation by referring once again to those who had been such a help to him up until then. The Catholic Episcopacy, on his request, held a conference on March 24, 1945, at the end of which it published a pastoral letter, intended less for its flock than for the Allied governments. Its principle aim was to emphasize the memorandum which Pavelic had sent to the English and the Americans, and point up the struggle of the Croatian people, or rather of the Ustashi government, as standing up against communism. The Allies' interests, he said, lay in the preservation of the puppet state which would now join the democratic powers with all its force. It was the second attempt of the Poglavnik in this direction, the first having been made in November 1944.

Here is the text of the letter of the Episcopacy, which is more political than pastoral: "History has taught us that during a past of 1,300 years, the Croatian people have never ceased to defend their rights of liberty and independence, both of which they ardently desire also for other people. And when during the second world war this ideal was strengthened and realized in our own state, the Croatian Catholic bishops have respected the wish of the Croatian people. Consequently, no one has the right to reproach any citizen of this state nor any of its bishops for having respected the indomitable will of the Croatian people." [11]

But the "line" was too obvious and the second plea was completely ignored by the Allied governments. Furthermore, there was not the slightest trace of any intercession by the use of those famous secret defense weapons, hailed by German propaganda, and which served for so long in maintaining certain ultimate illusions. So, for the third and last time Pavelic tried to save the monster that he had conceived, in transferring power to His

[10] Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 1035.
[11] *Katolicki List*, No. 12-13, 1945.

Grace Stepinac. Negotiations were started for this purpose and lasted for several days without success.

There remained only one solution for Pavelic and his henchmen—escape. The patriotic song "Za Dom Spremni" (Ready for Fatherland), no longer echoed throughout Croatia, where the only idea that obsessed countless people was for "everybody to run who could."

On the evening before their departure, May 4, 1945, Pavelic and Macek took leave of His Grace Stepinac during a secret session at the Palace of the Archbishopric. Before separating, His Grace Stepinac gave them the accolade and then his blessing for having both worked so valiantly for Croatia and the Roman Catholic faith.

His Grace Stepinac, in rendering Pavelic one last service, accepted the important dossiers of the Ustashi government and all the films and records of the Poglavnik's speeches, as well as the coffers filled with gold, and jewels and watches stolen from the Jews and the Serbs who had been assassinated. These were discovered at the Archbishopric and in the basements of some of the churches, and even under the altar at the monastery. As someone wrote: "Even the vicarages were used as cantonments, and the churches for storing weapons." [12]

After this meeting, which revealed even further the union between political and spiritual Croatia, the Ustashi General, Moskov, commanding Pavelic's personal bodyguard, entrusted Macek with the necessary passports for himself, his family and four deputies, as well as two cars and spending money amounting to 1,000 *gold louis*.[13] The following day, the Croatian caravan, composed of Pavelic and his suite, Macek and his suite, plus a few thousand executioners and torturers, and about 500 priests and Croatian religious officials, in a convoy such as has rarely been seen in all history, left Zagreb under the protection of the last German troops in retreat, and took the road of exile in the direction of Austria.

Thus it was that the most perfidious and blood-thirsty men of all satellite countries disappeared, leaving behind them almost a million victims.

* * *

By examining the sinister balance sheet, it is calculated that

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[12] *Le Monde*, December 7, 1951.

[13] *Drina* (Ustashi monthly paper, published in Madrid), April 1954. Also *Croatia* (Ustashi paper, published in Buenos Aires), April 10, 1957.

the Pavelic-Artukovic government succeeded in massacring approximately 750,000 Orthodox Serbs, and either deported or chased away 300,000. It is obvious that the number of victims in Croatia would have been even more numerous had the Serbs not joined the underground to save their lives and their religion. There were also 60,000 Jews and 26,000 Gypsies killed.

About 240,000 Serbian Orthodox were converted by force to Catholicism, the largest number of which, it should be mentioned, took place on the territory of His Grace Stepinac's diocese.

Professor Robert Lee Wolff describes the massacres committed by the Ustashi government, and the forced conversions, in the following paragraphs:

> Even more savage were the ghastly Ustashi massacres of Jews and Serbs in "Croatia." The Jews of Zagreb and Sarajevo were killed or sent to concentration camps, or deported to Poland for extermination. Ustashi gangs also slaughtered tens of thousands of Serbs. To some they offered the choice between conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, or instant death. Others were permitted to join a new and totally artificial "Croat Orthodox Church" with a Hitlerite White Russian at its head. In the mixed Serb-Croat villages, incredible scenes of violence took place, the whole population often being herded into Orthodox churches and burned alive. In this bloody work the Ustashi often had the assistance of many of the Moslem population, who were, from the first, treated with special favor by the Pavelic authorities (a mosque was even opened in Zagreb) and who were eventually recruited into a special SS division of their own, which later in the war, was reviewed and inspected by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.
>
> It must also be recorded as a historic fact that certain members of Croat hierarchy, notably Archbishop Sharich of Sarajevo, endorsed this butchery, and some members of the Franciscan order took an active part in the forced conversions of the Serbs, and also in the massacres. As for the Archbishop of Zagreb, Stepinac, whose trial and sentence, after the war has been a *cause celebre,* he attended Ustashi ceremonies, belonged to the commission for conversions of the Orthodox and often appeared in public on ceremonial occasions with members of the regime, to which the newspaper of his archdiocese gave its support.[14]

Attempting to justify, before world public opinion, this enormous proselytic crop of convertees, the Ustashi and Croatian

[14] *The Balkans in Our Time* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p. 205. Professor Wolff speaks of tens of thousands of slaughtered Serbs, although it would be truer to speak of hundreds of thousands. When he wrote this book, he could have found many documents about the real number of Ustashi victims.

Catholic clericals argued fallaciously that all these people had been Catholic during the Turkish occupation or during the "first" Yugoslavia and that they had become Serbian Orthodox under different pressure.

This thesis is defended by Archbishop A. Stepinac himself in his diary in which he wrote the following (while at the same time it proves the participation of the Croat Catholic Church in the conversion to Catholicism by force): "The most ideal thing would be if the Serbs were to return to the religion of their forefathers, i.e. to bend their heads before Christ's Vicar—our Holy Father." ("Diary," January 17, 1940, Volume III, p. 413).

Furthermore, in connection with the Turkish occupation, the Catholic propaganda never stops pointing out that "during the Turkish occupation there were mass conversions of Catholics to Orthodoxy." However, the truth of the matter is, that the Bogumil sect passed *en masse* to the Islamic religion, in addition to some Orthodox and probably some Catholics, in order to preserve their privileges and properties. The Turkish administration favored Islam and not Orthodoxy. In fact there were very few Catholics under Turkish domination, because they all left territories penetrated by the Turkish army.

This was also what Pavelic's representative at the Vatican dared to affirm during a conversation with Cardinal Tisserant. But he was dealing with a shrewd man. The French prelate replied that he was well acquainted with the history of Christianity and that, to his knowledge, no Catholic (of Roman rite) had ever become Serbian Orthodox.[15]

There were doubtless a few thousand people who, for one reason or another, during prewar Yugoslavia changed religions, mostly because of their marriage, just as anywhere else in the world. This, of course, was reciprocal, for the Orthodox did likewise. Even the Croatian press informs us: "The Vatican has been aware, for twenty-two years during the Karageorgevic reign in Yugoslavia, that not even 9,000 Catholics transferred to the Serbian Orthodox religion, and these for the most part, were young girls who had married officers, gendarmes, or custom and tax officials." [16]

* * *

[15] Rusinovic, *Report to the ministry for foreign affairs,* March 6, 1942. See supplement of *Tajni Dokumenti* for photocopy.
[16] *Hrvatska Zora* (Munich), September 1, 1954.

As for the material losses of the Serbian Orthodox Church, they amounted to seven billion dinars, to say nothing of the 299 churches which were burned or destroyed. In the one single Serbian Orthodox diocese of Gornji Karlovac (Croatia), located in the diocese of His Grace Alois Stepinac, 173 out of 189 churches were torn down. The churches of Jasenovac, Velika Kladusa, Surduk, Svica, Suha Mlaka, Veljun and Belegis, were turned into slaughterhouses; those of Hadzici, Plaski, Drvar, Travnik, Modric and Gomirje, into stores; those of Vreoce, Drinjaca, Mrkonjic Grad, Cvijanovicevo Brdo and Jajee, into public toilets; while the churches of Citluce, Donji Vakuf, Stari Majdan, Sanski Most, and Majkovac became stables.

In the regions where the Serbian Orthodox constituted the majority of the population, their churches were almost totally destroyed, whereas in the regions where they were in a minority, they were transformed for Catholic services, all of which goes to prove that a well-planned policy had been followed. In reality, the transformation of Serbian Orthodox churches to Catholic churches was carried on according to orders and instructions given by the Ordinariates. After instructions from the episcopal Ordinariate of Djakovo (NO 2733/42, April, 1942), Serbian Orthodox churches were transformed into Catholic churches in the localities of Bracevci, Majar, Dopsin, Tenje, Dalj, Markusica, Kapelna, Kucanci, Paucje, Budimci, Poganovci, Bijelo Brdo, Borovo Selo, Trpinja, Pacetin, Brsadin, Cepin, Martinci Capinski, Trnjani, Klokocevik, Topolje, Brod na Savi.

The following is an authorization, like the kind that came from the Ordinariate of Djakovo, and destined for the priests, O. Stjepan Rade and O. Pavao Dodic (No. 848/42, dated February 14, 1942) coming only three months after the Plenary Conference of the Catholic Episcopacy (November 17, 1941), it throws light on the sincerity of the declaration concerning the spoliation of the edifices and holdings of the Serbian Orthodox church.

> Since there are no Catholic churches or holy liturgical objects left in any of the villages of the County of Vukovar where the missionary brothers were sent, the missionary brothers are henceforward permitted to transform the Greek Church of oriental rituals into a Catholic church, for the purpose of giving preliminary religious instruction for the eventual use of Catholic ritual and, above all, for Holy Mass. This must be in agreement with a competent parochial Catholic office and the Orthodox inhabitants of the locality who have made a request to be taken into the Catholic church. In order to

accomplish this, the iconographic altar should be taken down. In cases where this is impossible, a temporary altar can be erected in front of the "iconostace." All objects displaced should be brought to a designated locality, whereas all objects necessary for Holy Mass and lent by the parochial diocese, will be turned over to the missionaries. In this way they will be able to officiate at Holy mass every day, even in the locality where religious instruction is taking place. Before beginning services, the church should first be blessed according to the specified benediction noted in the book of ritual. Holy water should be brought to the parochial church and protected from the cold. In certain regions where the transformation of the church for Catholic ritual has not been possible, a demand to a competent district office should be necessary for requisitioning the primary school.[17]

Such a document sufficed in proving, if proof was still needed, the close ties that bound the Catholic hierarchy and the Ustashi government on all the details concerning their mutual racist and religious policy.

All possessions of the Serbian Orthodox church were confiscated and turned over to the Croatian Catholic church. His Grace Stepinac, for instance, was given the Orahovica Monastery, which he ceded to the Trappists, while Bishop Janko Simrak took over the Lepavina Monastery, built in the sixteenth century, the same monastery where Patriarch Arsenije Carnojevic stayed in 1693, while organizing the emigration of the Serbs who had left southern Serbia during the Turkish invasion of Europe.

Thus, notwithstanding all the hues and cries that have circulated abroad, the Croatian Catholic hierarchy, via the state directorate for reconstruction, and via the commission for the confiscation of Serbian Orthodox churches and their estates, attached to the State Museum in Zagreb, appropriated the furnishings and buildings of the "rival" church.

* * *

Once hate came to dwell in the human heart it seems to have remained there once and for all. In 1946, after a frightful holocaust which reached to the heavens, His Grace Stepinac again showed the same execration toward the Orthodox in general, and the Serbian people in particular.

While not having had the satisfaction of seeing the "schism" ended by the Germans, the Ustashi, or by the Hungarians and Albanians, His Grace Stepinac had not despaired of the future

[17] Viktor Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 690.

and entrusted the plan of *Pax Romana* to a British officer—the crushing of Orthodoxy.

Below are the words of this British officer, who gives an integral description of his visit to the Archbishop of Zagreb:

> Eighteen months ago, while serving as a British liaison officer in Yugoslavia, I read in the German-controlled press and heard over the Zagreb radio the call of Archbishop Stepinac to his people to rally to the crumbling Croat State and resist the Allied armies which were advancing toward a final victory. A few weeks later, Zagreb was freed, Pavelic had fled and the Archbishop remained.
>
> Back in Zagreb a year later, I was surprised in view of the many changes which had taken place in Yugoslavia, to find His Grace Stepinac still primate in Croatia. I called on him in his palace and he talked with me alone over an hour. He told me frankly that he and those of his priests who had collaborated with the Germans had done so because the issue in the war had been a clear one between fascism and communism, and he had chosen the former while the British had chosen the latter. He regretted the horrors of the Nazi occupation, but he preferred them to the present Federal regime, first, because this had, in his view, been imposed on Croatia by the Serbs, and, secondly, because while the Germans and Ustashi had burned the churches and killed the congregations, the Communists, by their educational and land reforms were threatening the hold of the Church over its schools and estates. He looked to the West to use its atomic power to impose Western civilization on Moscow and Belgrade before it was too late. . . . As I passed through the shadowed cloisters into the Cathedral square, I wondered how long His Grace would retain the spiritual leadership of the Church of Croatia.[18]

In the mind of His Grace Stepinac, this atomic war would be nothing more than a great crusade against Orthodoxy, which would open the way to the Roman church in Russia, Bulgaria, Roumania, Greece and Serbia. Imposing Western civilization was synonomous with imposing Catholicism by fire and by sword. This was the doctrine of "re-christianization," developed by the German Jesuit, Friedrich Muckermann. In his book, *Catholic Action* (prefaced by Cardinal Pacelli, subsequently Pope Pius XII, but at the time apostolic nuncio at Munich), Muckermann defined the aims of this association in the following paragraph:

"The Pope is appealing to 'Catholic Action' for a new crusade. It is our guide, bearing the standard of Christ. It is not only the Church that is involved, but also the state, and the fields of science and art. Catholic Action signifies the rallying of world Catholicism. It must live through its heroic hour, for it is from

[18] *The New Statesman and Nation* (London), October 26, 1946.

the blood of martyrs that the first era of western Christianity was made. A new world can only be gained at the price of bloodshed for Christ."

His Grace Stepinac, the indisputable Head of Catholic Action in Croatia, was made Cardinal by Pius XII. The Pontiff justified this promotion to a higher office in a discourse he gave at the Consistory, January 12, 1953: "Although absent we embrace him with fatherly love—and we strongly desire that everyone know that when we decided to decorate him with the nobility of the Roman purple, we had nothing else in mind save to reward in a manner befitting his deserving merits. . . . [for he] is an example of apostolic zeal and of Christian fortitude." [19]

In these pages it has been shown what these "services," so highly praised by the Holy Father, really signified. Moreover, the nature of them has been again recently confirmed by one higher up and more qualified to recognize their value. This is none other than the Jesuit Father Stjepan (Stephen) Lackovic, His Grace Stepinac's secretary during the war, and since the defeat of the Axis, a refugee in the United States. He has risen up against the extradition of Andrija Artukovic, whom Yugoslavia requested of the U.S.A., so that he could be judged for his innumerable crimes. In unison with R. F. Ross, in an interview with an editor of the *Mirror News* in Los Angeles, he declared: "Adrija Artukovic is the leading Catholic layman of Croatia and was the lay spokesman of Cardinal Stepinac. Hardly a day passed between 1941 and 1945 but what I was in his office or he was in mine. He consulted with the Cardinal on the moral aspects of every action he took." [20]

It is therefore very clear, according to the statement of his own secretary, that His Grace Stepinac watched and approved every step of Artukovic, Minister of the Interior and Ustashi government as well. And when one considers the "activities" of this Croatian Himmler, who was chief of police as well as of the concentration camps, and who decided on the life and death of the Orthodox Serbs and the Jews, one must conclude that these "activities" had been previously submitted to the Archbishop of Zagreb for his "moral" approval.

In the light of this testimony, how can the so-called interventions of His Grace Stepinac, through Andrija Artukovic,

[19] *The New York Times*, International Edition (New York), January 13, 1953.
[20] *Mirror News* (Los Angeles), January 24, 1958.

Minister of the Interior, not be considered gestures, meant to mislead public opinion? The following is a sample of such intervention:

> Jasenovac camp is a shameful stain on the honor of the Independent State of Croatia. It is a disgrace to Croatia. Already there are so many measures that those who know the situation [reference to the Jews in Croatia] will say that not even in Germany were the racial laws applied with such rigor and such speed. I do not think it can bring us any glory if it is said of us that we have solved the Jewish problem in the most radical way, that is to say, the cruelest. . . . Let the personal and civil liberty of the Jews, or the descendants of Jews who after their conversion to the Catholic church no longer consider themselves Jews, but who take part in all the Croatian activities, religious and patriotic, be protected.[21]

It seems that Stepinac was interested only in those Jews who had been converted, for he added: "I wrote to you, Mr. Minister, on May 22nd of this year, asking that you do something to protect the Jews converted to Catholicism from the Jewish religion." [22]

Further evidence of the Archbishop's influence with the Ustashi regime, as well as of his hatred for the Serbian church, was brought out by Siegfried Kasche, Nazi Minister to Pavelic, at the trial of Stepinac in 1946. When the Germans drove 500 priests from Slovenia toward Serbia, Stepinac asked that these priests be allowed to stay in Croatia, where he would find them a place, and that in their place 500 Serbian clergymen from Croatia be driven out.

* * *

One might say that Roman purple had a symbolic value; it signified that he who was clothed in scarlet was ready to shed his blood for his faith. Quantities of blood were shed "for Christ," according to Jesuit Father Muckermann, but it was not the blood of the future Cardinal, it was the blood of 750,000 Serbs, 60,000 Jews, and 26,000 Gypsies who became innocent victims.

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[21] Letter from Stepinac to Andrija Artukovic, dated May 30, 1941.
[22] *Ibid.*

Chapter IX

Silence at the Vatican

IT IS UNDENIABLE that Pavelic up until his death was protected by the Vatican and that even on his deathbed he received the papal blessing. Pope Pius XII and Stepinac always considered him a practicing Catholic. Therefore he and his Ustashi were protected and are still being protected by the Vatican, because of their devotion to the Roman Catholic Church, despite the odious crimes they committed.

Mr. Jean Hussard, a witness of the bloody tragedy which lasted four years in satellite Croatia, wrote shortly before the end of the war:

> If the fanaticism of the Croatian church, synonomous with the old Habsburgian mentality, appears in the crimes of the priests against the Serbs, how can the silence of the Vatican be explained? For more than a year, the culpability of certain Catholic priests was flagrant in the massacres of the Serbs by the Croats, and Rome did not seem in the least disturbed. Not only did the supreme Head of Catholicism fail to raise his voice in protest against the crimes, but he even refused to acknowledge the appeals that came from all parts of the world, soliciting papal aid in favor of the decimated Serbs.
>
> While the Archbishop of Sarajevo, His Grace Saric, was encouraging the persecution of the Serbs, His Grace Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb, was attending the opening of Pavelic's parliament, where he pronounced words that were not in the least deprecatory to the regime, and Pope Pius XII was giving an audience to Pavelic.
>
> Why did the Vatican, in choosing to keep an obstinate silence, give the impression that the extermination of the Orthodox Serbs, practiced with such violence by the Ustashi, coincided with the dream of Croatian Catholicism to extend the frontier of its influence eastward?
>
> How could the people, in their desperate anger which had been provoked by the Serbo-Croatian drama, be convinced that the Roman church had not closed its eyes to the obligation for the still extant Serbs to accept Catholicism?
>
> What estimate could be made concerning the numbers?
>
> In the diocese of Gornji Karlovac (near Zagreb),[1] which comprised 460,000 Serbian Orthodox, 280,000 were killed; 50,000 had gone to hide in the mountains; and about 50,000 were sent to Serbia. The remaining 80,000 had been forced to become Catholics.
>
> It could therefore be concluded that the Croatian Catholic church,

[1] Karlovac is located in the diocese of Cardinal Stepinac.

at last victorious over intransigent Orthodoxy, and overjoyed at having broken down the wall which for centuries had been barring the road, had obtained a sort of carte blanche in the form of silence.

Tomorrow, when the end of the war will have realized their hopes, these Serbs will return to their religion. Catholicism will no longer be able to count on these "improvised" believers. The wall of Orthodoxy will rise once more, but this time it will be higher and more thickly cemented.[2]

Since these lines were written, the prediction they contained has been fully realized. The Serbs converted to Catholicism "without the slightest pressure of the civil and religious authorities," as the *Osservatore Romano* expressed it, these 240,000 neophytes who represented entire villages suddenly enlightened by the "truths of Catholic faith," returned to Orthodoxy.

At that time, Jean Hussard still doubted whether the Vatican would have deliberately consented to this proselytism through the terror practiced by the Croatian bishops, the priests and other religious officials. Thus he wrote: "By a clever manipulation of figures, perhaps they made the supreme head of Christian thought believe that the Serbs who had transferred to Catholicism were poor miserable people who had been spared death." [3]

This was an excuse which, until the end of the drama, was often made by official spokesmen of the Holy See, but by them only.

As to the methods of terror which were used in order to obtain results, it has been shown how the Ustashi and missionaries worked together. Among overwhelming numbers of testimonials only a few have been cited, but they suffice in wiping away all doubt, and it is beyond dispute, that the Holy Father could not have been ignorant of what was going on, for even in Italy the newspapers never hesitated printing texts, such as the following, in their columns. "The first Brother of Assisi spoke with the birds and fish calling them brothers and sisters, but his disciples and spiritual heirs, filled with hate, massacre the people in the Independent State of Croatia, who are before God the Father, their own brothers, brothers of the same blood, the same language, and the same mother earth who had nourished them with the sap from her breasts. They massacre, they kill, and bury people alive. They throw their victims into the rivers, the sea, and into crevices. Bands of these killers still exist and

[2] Jean Hussard, *op. cit.*, pp. 212, 214, 215, 216, 217.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

they are still in a state of frenzied excitement, led on by the priests and the Catholic religious officials." [4]

His Grace Marcone, the "apostlic visitor" personally representing the Holy Father was present furthermore, and his cordial and even intimate relationship with Pavelic is in itself significant. Krunoslav Draganovic, member of the committee for the conversions, and chaplain at the concentration camp of Jasenovac, was a liaison agent between the Archbishop of Zagreb and the Vatican. His Grace Stepinac went twice to Rome during the war. The state secretariat possessed photograph albums of the massacres and massive conversions. The words of His Grace Tisserant have already been quoted but, in addition, the words which His Grace Montini, under secretary of state, addressed to Rusinovic, and which the envoy of the Ustashi government to the Vatican noted, can now be read: "Right at the beginning of the conversation he asked: 'What is happening in Croatia which is causing such alarm all over the world? Is it true that crimes have been committed, and has the treatment of those deported been so terrible?' " [5]

Protestations from everywhere were raining down on the Vatican; from all the allied governments and from important personalities in the rest of the world. As for the Yugoslav government-in-exile, it tried several different times, through its legation, to ask the Holy See to intercede in Croatia and stop the massacres and forced conversions. The legation even sent a protest on January 9, 1942 (Note 1/42) against the formation of committees for conversion. The following is a report concerning this demand from Serbia: "Dr. Prvislav Grisogono sent a letter to Dr. Ujcic, the Archbishop of Belgrade, in which he appealed to the Archbishop to ask the Pope to use all possible means to stop the massacres. In his reply, Dr. Ujcic said: 'I thank you for your letter. The information about the massacres we have already received from many different sources. I have forwarded everything to the Vatican and I believe that everything possible will be done.' " [6]

But doing "everything possible" ended in doing nothing at all. If only the sovereign pontiff had interceded efficaciously in

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[4] Corrado Zoli, Uccelini di Gracac, *Il Resto del Carlino* (Bologna), September 18, 1941.

[5] Nikola Rusinovic, *Official Report,* February 4, 1942. See supplement of *Tajni Dokumenti* for photocopy.

[6] David Martin, *Ally Betrayed* (New York, 1946), p. 59.

Catholic Croatia, Pavelic and his executioners would have had to listen and the great tragedy would have been avoided or, at least, attenuated.

When the Ustashi, David Spincic, was given an audience by the Pope on July 9, 1943, Pavelic's emissary at Rome, Erwein Lobkowicz, sent the following report to the minister of foreign affairs: "It is very significant that he received the invitation for this audience as a Minister."

Wasn't this an implicit recognition of the Ustashi government?

In order to judge the attitude of the Vatican toward the Ustashi government, the report which Pavelic's attaché at Rome, Nikola Rusinovic, made May 9, 1942, is most revealing:

> We still have many enemies. Even the so-called friends are attacking us by intriguing against us everywhere, and above all, at the Vatican. They refer to gangsters and gangsterism in Croatia. It is said that 8,000 photographs have been collected as proofs of the crimes committed by the Ustashi against the Serbian population. I am doing everything possible to dissipate these falsehoods. Advice has been given by friends, and by others at the Vatican, to collect proofs, photographs, and other documents concerning the crimes committed by the chetniks and communists against our population. It is above all our friends at the Vatican who insist that we must gather together all information so that the Vatican can use it and give us help. The Vatican's opinion of us would be known by our enemies, as well as by those who are indifferent.[7]

Following the instructions of the Vatican, Pavelic's government hastened to publish the Gray Book in which all the Ustashi crimes were laid to General Mihailovic and the resistance forces in general.

It could have been thought that this attitude was prompted by opportunism, and that once the storm was over, the voice of God's Vicar would rise up to denounce, even retrospectively, these incredible horrors. People who had nourished this hope were cruelly disappointed.

The Croatian episcopacy, before the general indignation, felt obliged for the first time since 1941 to reprove the criminal acts of a part of the clergy, in its pastoral letter of September 20, 1945: "We admit that there were some priests who, misled by national and partisan passion, sinned against the holy law of

[7] See supplement of *Tajni Dokumenti* for photocopy.

Justice and Christian charity, and who, for that reason, must answer for their acts before the courts of earthly justice." [8]

The author is aware of Tito's persecutions of all churches in Communist Yugoslavia, but when the Yugoslav government, as any government would have done in any other country, decided to punish those who are guilty of war crimes, the Vatican tried to sway world public opinion by describing this act of justice as "religious persecution." This attempt was in large part successful. "Among the simple people, this purging of those who had fought side by side with the Germans against the Serbs, and whose acts of cruelty were legendary, was considered as anti-Catholic persecution." [9]

The same stubbornness in denying the evidence was discovered in the protests, tardy though it was (appearing only in 1953), made by the Vatican for the first time. Harassed by the accusations of the Yugoslav government, it attempted to exonerate the Catholic Croatian hierarchy. As the *Osservatore Romano* wrote: "It is a disgraceful falsehood; and it is absolutely not true that the Catholic bishops approved of the monstrosities committed by the Ustashi regime. On the contrary, they were condemned publicly as were the forced conversions, that being their apostolic and humanitarian duty. They reproached Pavelic for the monstrosities and the crimes which polluted his regime, and they also rose up against the racism of the invader." [10]

Such a statement seems like an aberration. Just where and when did the author, or inspirer, of these lines ever hear of a bishop "publicly condemning" Ustashi crimes at the time they were being committed? One thing is certain, there was no mention of it in the *Katolicki List, Nedelja* or in any other episcopal publication, always overflowing with praise for the Poglavnik's cleverness.

It was, however, a Catholic author who, in his book, *A Church of Silence,* recalled the Vatican's principles: "Even the hierarchic and supernational constitution of the Catholic church forbids the Holy See to allow its priests to evade its authority and go to work for the state or the government." [11]

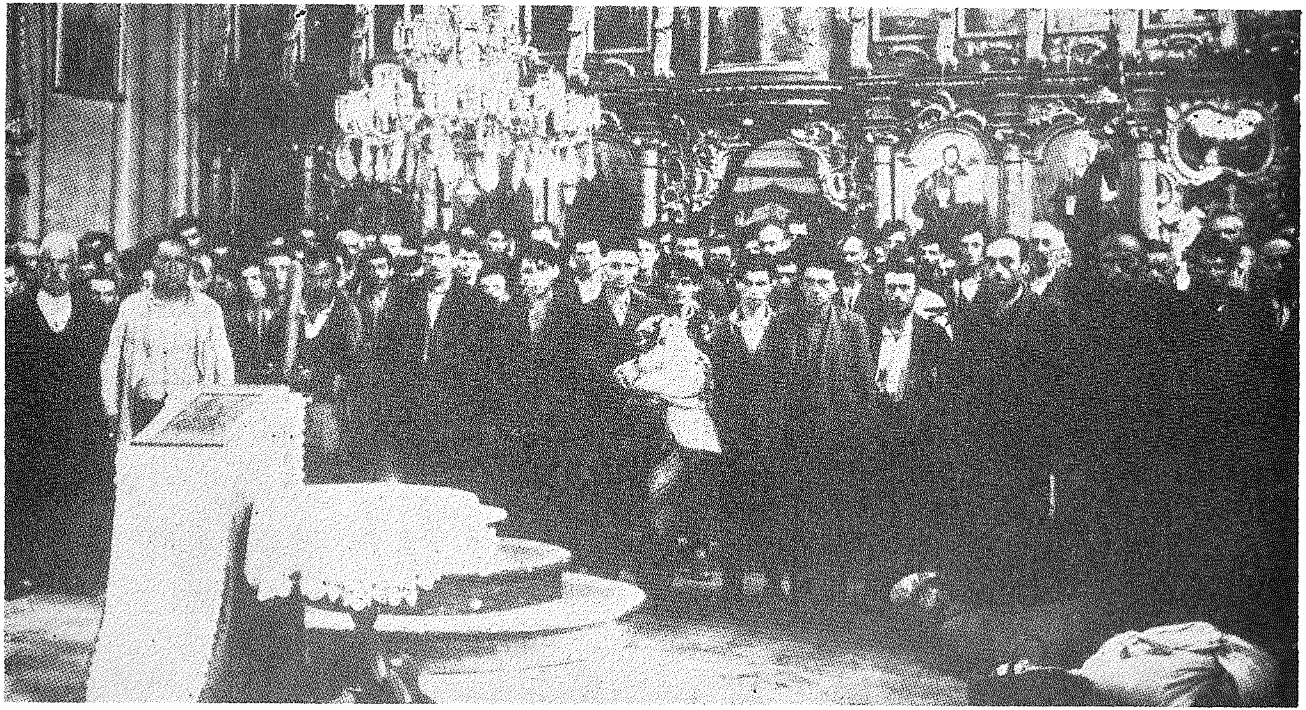
It has been observed that the most sacred canonic prescriptions

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[8] *Cashiers du Nouveau Monde* (Paris, 1945), vol. II, No. 6.
[9] *Informations catholiques Internationales* (Paris), October 15, 1955.
[10] *Osservatore Romano,* May 31, 1953.
[11] *Une Eglise du Silence Catholiques en Yougoslavie* (Brussels, 1954), p. 88.



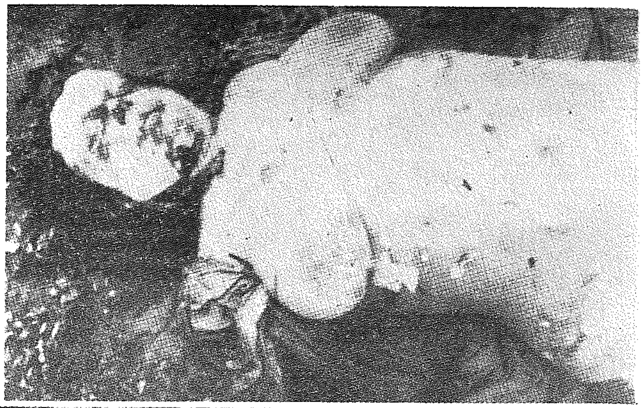
This and the following pictures show what Pavelic, Artukovic (now living in Los Angeles) and other Ustashi left behind when they fled the country. Bodies are lined up for identification (Gudovac, near Bjelovar).

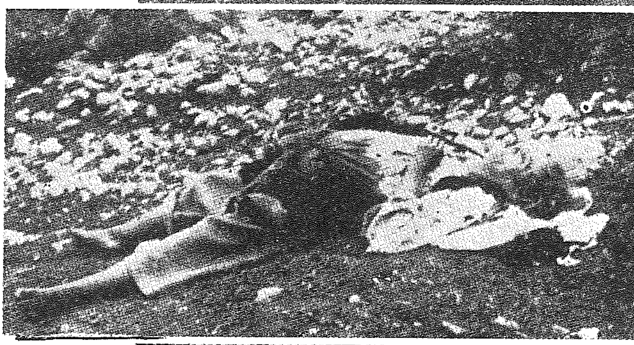


(From the files of notorious Ustashi police chief, Bozidar Cerovski, Zagreb).
Famous massacre of the Serbs, by the Ustashi, in the Serbian Orthodox Church in Glina on Aug. 21, 1941. Only one survived —Ljubo Jadnak.



1941: Children in Stara Gradiska concentration camp slowly starving to death. The government of satellite Croatia (Andrija Artukovic, Minister of Interior) ordered caustic soda to be added to their food in order to exterminate them.







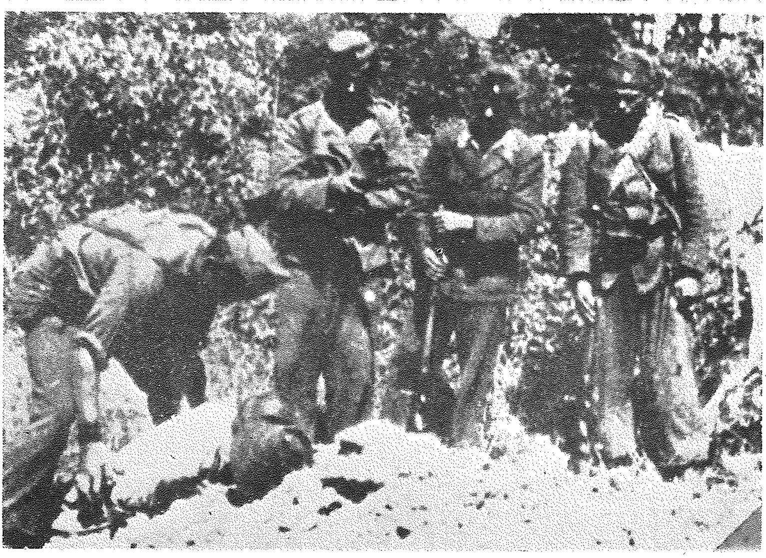
The Ustashi took pictures following their "heroic deeds," bayonetting the "seeds of the beasts."

One of the crazed priests, Fr. Ivan Raguz, had no inhibitions, repeatedly urged the killing of all Serbs, including children so that "not even the seeds of the beasts are left."



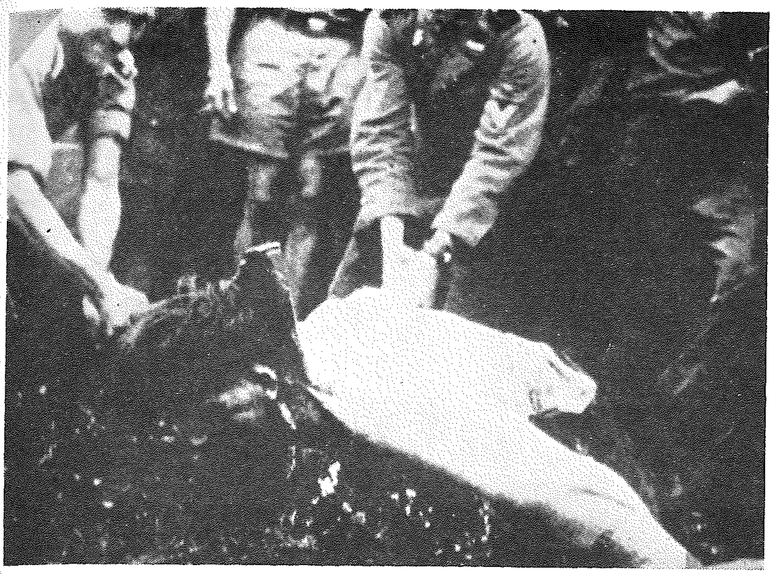
Ustashi carrying the head of a Serbian Orthodox priest.



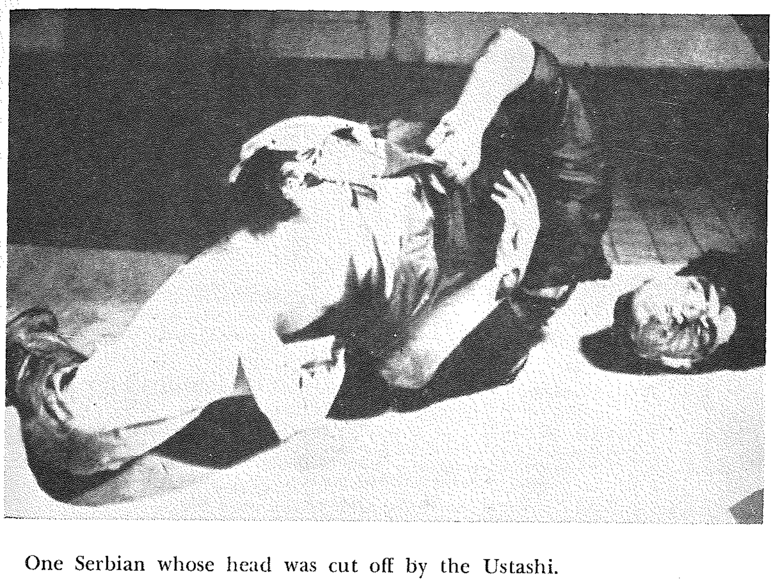


Top: This peasant had to dig his own grave. Sadistic Ustashi show him the knife with which they will kill him.

Bottom: After the job is done.



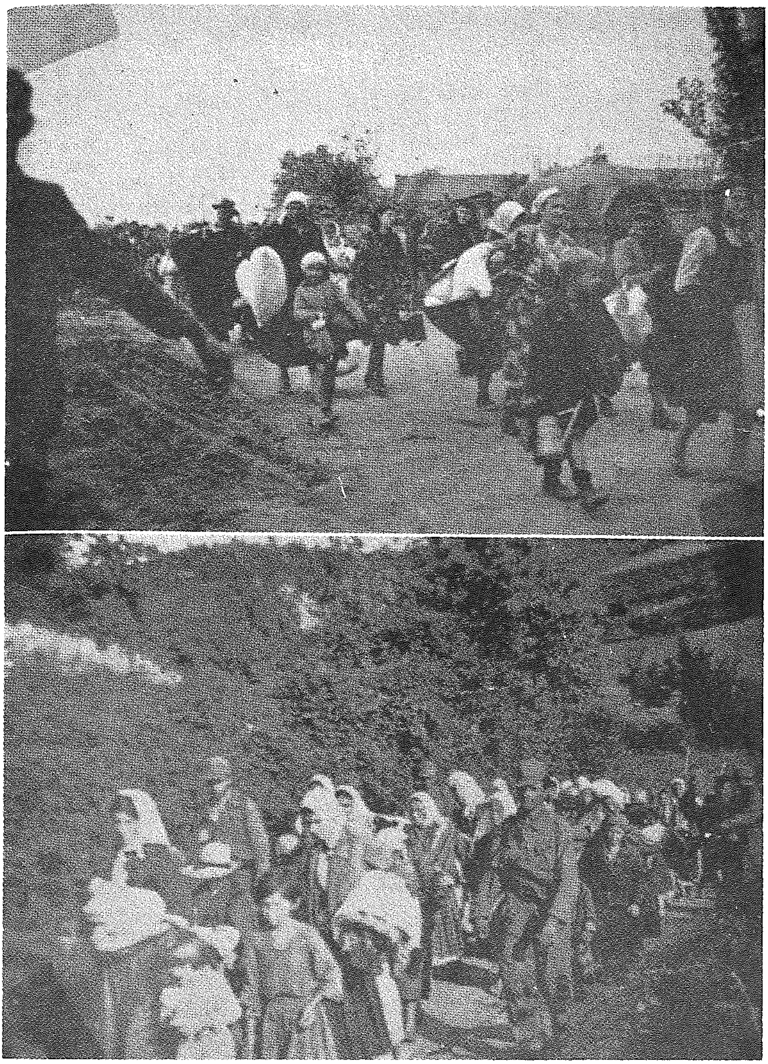
An Ustashi, with a sadistic smile on his face, chopping off a man's head with an axe.



One Serbian whose head was cut off by the Ustashi.



Ustashi escorting Serbian girls and women to concentration camps.



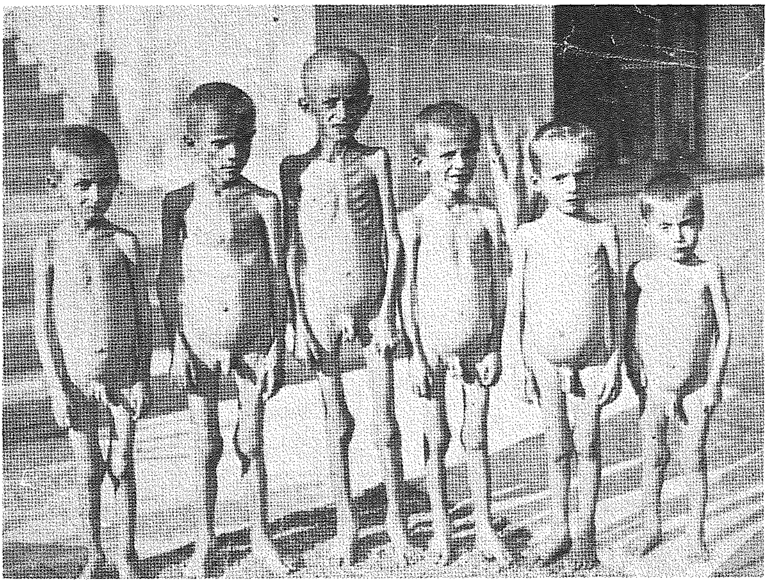
Where will they go? The Ustashi led them to concentration camps, or threw them alive in deep pits or off steep precipices. Regardless of the manner—sure death for all of them.



More Serbian women and children, labeled as enemies of the State of Croatia, being taken to concentration camps, where they died of starvation, or were killed.



This mother with her six children, considered as great enemies of the State of Croatia, were sent to a concentration camp by Andrija Artukovic.



Serbian children saved from an Ustashi camp.



The forcible proselytism of Orthodox Serbs in a village in the County of Bosanska Dubica.



Vlaho Margetic, Franciscan, forcibly proselytizing Orthodox Serbs.



Another picture of Margetic in action.



Slavko Kvaternik (second from left), Vojskovodja, (marshal) of Pavelic's Independent State of Croatia among high ranking German military officers. He declared the Independence of Croatia on April 10, 1941, under the protection of the German Army which captured Zagreb on the same day. The Croatian paper, *Danica,* of Chicago, Illinois, defending Kvaternik, wrote as follows on May 7, 1958: "Poor martyred Kvaternik! We must defend him for he gave his life for our fatherland. We must defend his stand as a Fifth Columnist and as a Collaborator [Nazi]. To attack him now is to follow the Partisan line. He was a great [Ustashi] fighter for Croatia and no strangers are now going to blacken his name."



Gold watches taken from Serbian and Jewish victims, hidden in the Archbishop's residence in Zagreb, and found after the retreat of the Ustashi.



This picture shows gold fillings and teeth, which the Ustashi jerked out of the mouths of their victims.



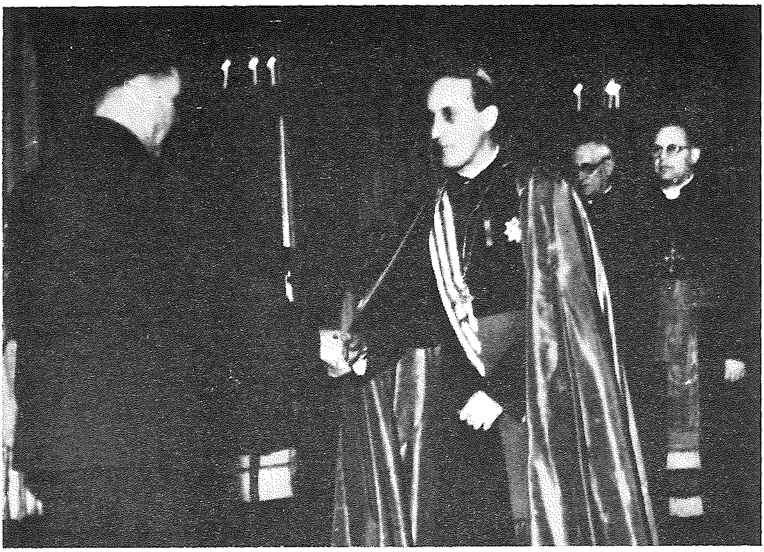
Victim of a special group of Ustashi called, "skull crushers." They used to photograph their deeds to show their chief, the Minister of the Interior, Andrija Artukovic, in the hope of receiving a decoration from him.



Minister of Interior Andrija Artukovic (x), and Ustasha Budak, Minister of Education and Cults, greet Hitler's Moslem Quisling Amin-el Husseini, Ex-Mufti.



The Croat Catholic Press in service to Ustashi regime.

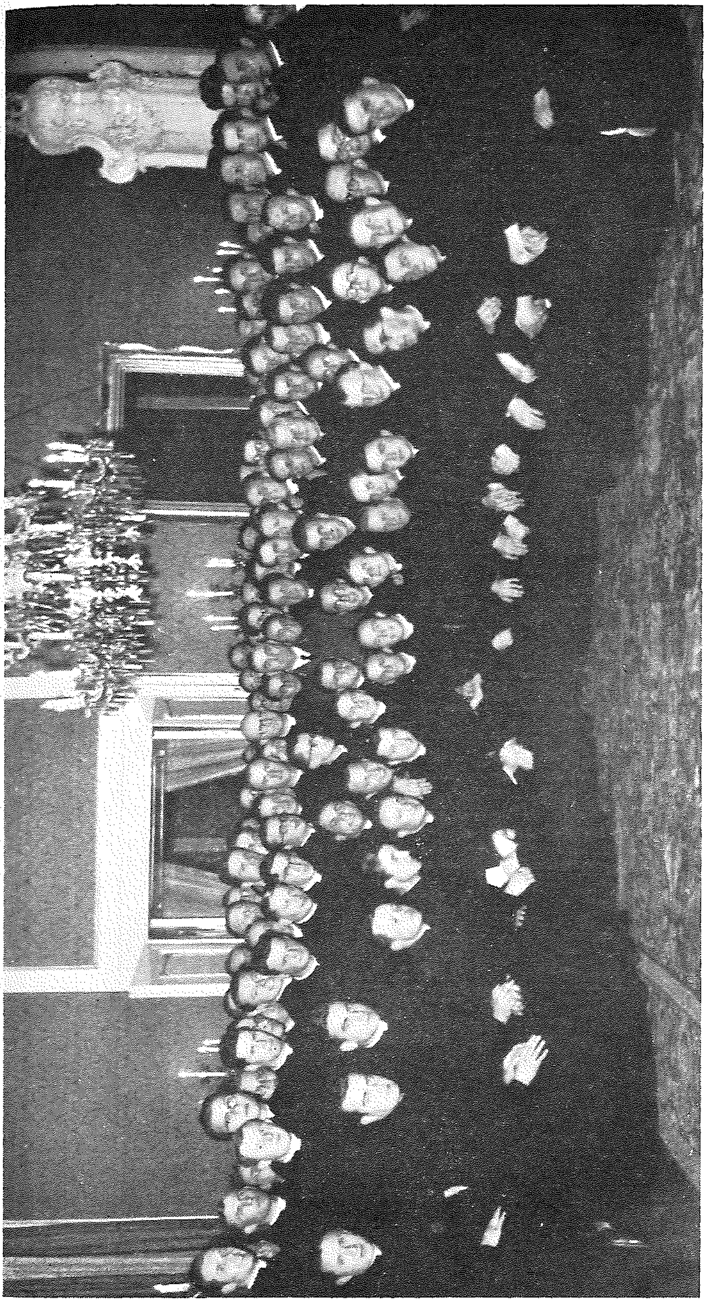


Dr. Alois Stepinac, Archibishop of Zagreb, shown wearing the Ustashi decoration, together with his personnel, bringing New Year greetings to Ante Pavelic.



Devout Catholic, Dr. Mile Budak, Minister of Education and Cults, said on July 22, 1941:

"The movement of the Ustashi is based on religion. For the minorities —Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, we have three million bullets. We shall kill one part of the Serbs. We shall transport another, and the rest of them will be forced to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. Thus, our new Croatia will get rid of all Serbs in our midst in order to become one hundred percent Catholic within ten years."



Ante Pavelic surrounded with Croatian Catholic clergy in April, 1942.



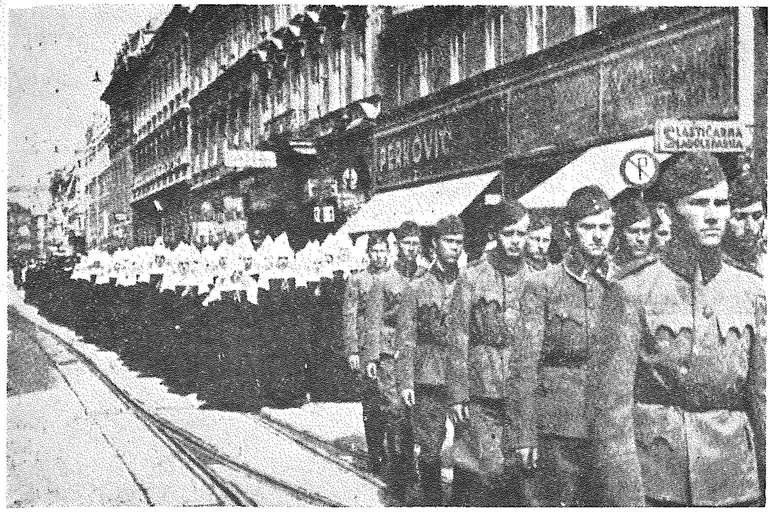
Pavelic among Croatian Franciscans.



"Once an Ustasha—Ustasha until death."
Ustashi raise three fingers as they are sworn to loyalty. Andrija Artukovic (center).



Extreme left: Minister of Interior of satellite Croatia, Andrija Artukovic, and Poglavnik Pavelic, greet Hitler's envoy in the presence of Artukovic's Security Police (same as Hitler's S. S. troops).



Nuns marching together with Croaţian nazi-legionnaires (Ustashi).



Nuns also saluting in fascist manner.



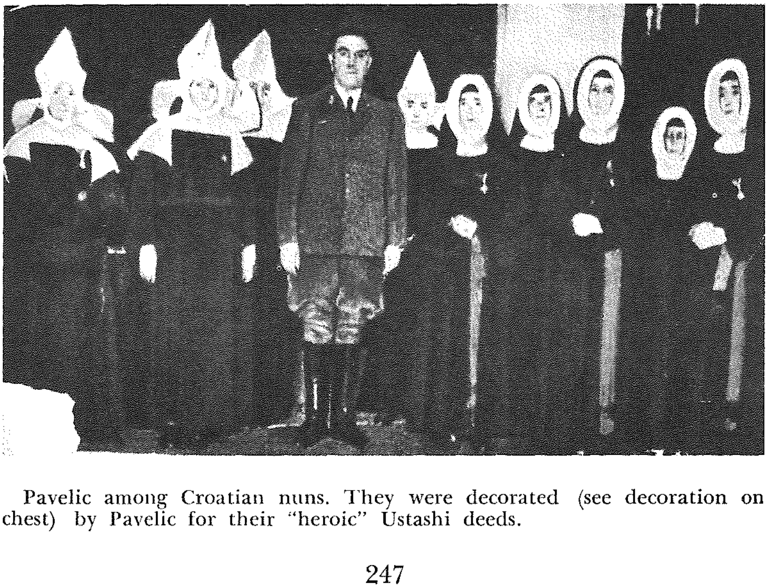
Religious ceremony during the promotion of Ustashi officers held at Kerestinac. Left, Pavelic (x) and Artukovic (x), Minister of Interior Affairs, look on.



Croatian clergymen giving the fascist salute during a reception by Pavelic.



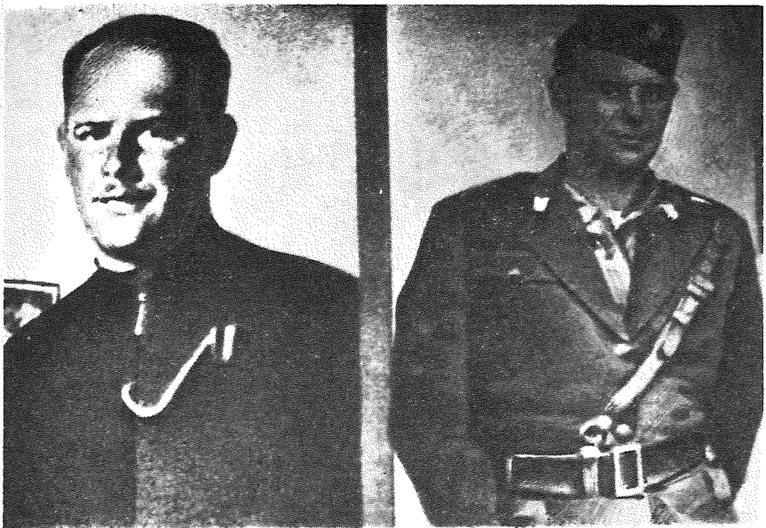
The Archbishop of Zagreb, Stepinac, leads Pavelic in the Church of St. Mark in Zagreb, where he personally served Te Deum at the occasion of the opening of the Croatian Fascist Parliament.



Pavelic among Croatian nuns. They were decorated (see decoration on chest) by Pavelic for their "heroic" Ustashi deeds.



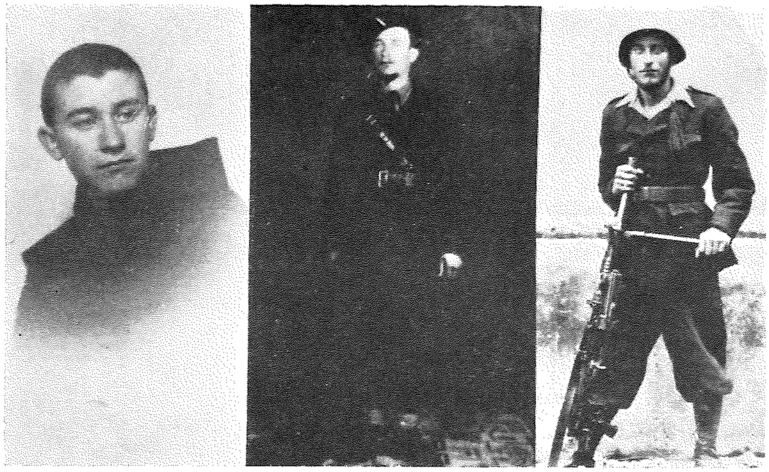
Catholic Ustasha ridicules Serbian Orthodox religion with stole taken from village home after killing the occupant, a Serbian priest.





Above: Two pictures of a Franciscan friar, Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorovic, in the uniform of the Ustashi.

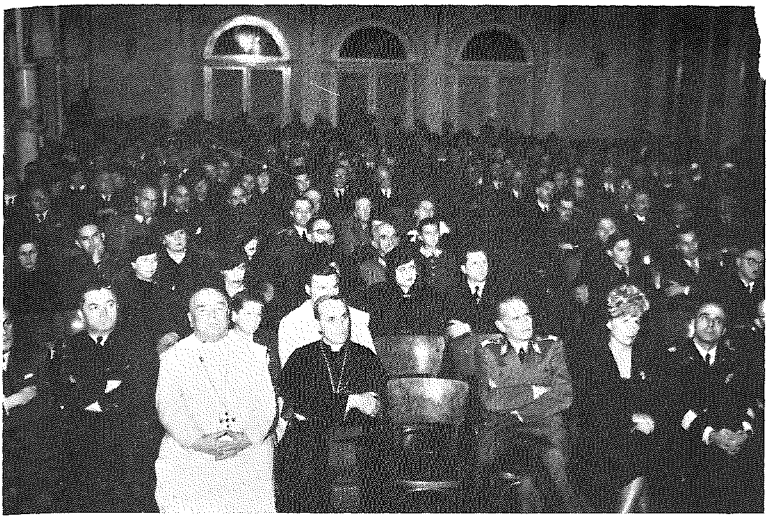
Bottom: The same friar reads a mass during a celebration in Banja Luka. On his right is the Ustashi's Veliki Zhupan (governor) of Banja Luka, holding a wreath of wheat.



Stane Kukavica, Croatian Franciscan, seen as a member of the Ustashi village sentry, and as a member of the Italian "Feerless Battalion."



At the celebration during the opening of the Ustashi Headquarters in Zagreb, Rev. Stipe Vucetic and his assistant greeting the Ustashi dignitaries in the fascistic manner.



An Ustashi manifestation held in November, 1942. Papal Legate Marcone (in white) is flanked by Archbishop Stepinac and Andrija Artukovic.



The whole Croatian Episcopate visiting Pavelic. On Pavelic's right is Archbishop Stepinac; on his left is Archbishop Ivan Saric of Sarajevo.



Above: Bozidar Bralo, Franciscan, secretary to the Archbishop of Sarajevo, and commander of western Bosnia, surrounded by Ustashi guards while giving political talk in Zemun.

Below: Pavelic with his wife in company with Papal Nuncio Marcone (in white) and Archbishop Stepinac.



At an Ustashi celebration. Left to right: Von Troll, adviser to the German Embassy in Zagreb; Gleise von Horstenau, the German plenipotentiary general in Croatia; Slavko Kvaternik, Ustashi marshal and Pavelic's gauleiter; Gen. Ugo, Chief of Staff of the Italian Supreme Command, and Msgr. Stepinac, the Archbishop of Zagreb.



Archbishop Stepinac, in his residence (April, 1941) giving a banquet for Ustashi emigrants who had returned to Croatia and who some days later were to begin participating in the mass massacre of Orthodox Serbs and Jews.





While Archbishop Stepinac was sitting with Hitler's Nazis and Mussolini's Fascists (beside him is Papal Nuncio Ramiro Marcone in the white robe) at the opening of the Ustashi fair at Zagreb (upper picture) meanwhile the Serbian Patriarch Gevrilo was taken prisoner at the Monastery of Ostrog, and some days later was sent to the Concentration Camp at Mathausen (lower picture).

were not respected in regard to sincerity and freedom of thought concerning the conversions. The Holy See gladly accepted His Grace Stepinac occupying a seat in the Ustashi parliament, accompanied by a bishop and nine other priests. Lenience was also shown to all associates who could add prestige to positions such as prefects or chiefs of police in the Ustashi government, while retaining sacerdotal responsibilities. The same was true for His Grace Tiso in Slovakia, the first purveyor of the Auschwitz. What opinion could one draw of such "tolerance" except that the priests, in accepting government positions, did so without escaping from the jurisdiction of the Holy See which had not only granted them permission, but given them a mission as well.

The absence of all blame can thus be easily explained, as well as the simple call to order in regard to the ecclesiastics who had been the most compromised. The priests who had been denounced by Rev. Svetozar Rittig continued to officiate in the temples of God. The notorious executioner of Jasenovac, the ignominious Filipovic-Majstorovic, went to mass every day up until the time of his arrest, and he was hung while wearing his clerical robes. No one has ever heard of the 500 religious officials who fled in Pavelic's convoy being subjected to sanctions. Even the Poglavnik and his principal collaborationist succeeded in procuring restful retreats under the protection of the Assistance Commission for "Political Refugees."

Therefore, there can be no misunderstanding concerning His Grace Stepinac's promotion to a "cardinalcy," for this was a "just reward for his distinguished merits." Mr. Jules Moch, former French prime minister, in his book entitled, *Yugoslavia,* reports on the inquiries he made when he was there. Among many others, he recounts the well-known story about the Archbishop of Zagreb: "He allowed frightful massacres without ever raising his voice in protest, and he always defended the Ustashi regime," a Croatian Catholic told us after he had accompanied us to a Dalmatian Church where, after sprinkling himself with Holy water and kneeling before the altar, he added: "He was hated by the Catholic patriots." [12]

Mr. Francois Fejto, the great expert on southeastern Europe wrote: "From 1939 to 1941, the Vatican witnessed, with satisfaction, the founding of small fascist states favorable to the influence of the church and built on the ruins of heretical Czecho-

[12] Jules Moch, *Yougoslavie* (Monaco 1953), p. 155.

slovakia and Yugoslavia, preponderantly Orthodox. His Grace Tiso was never repudiated by the Holy See, although many non-communist Czechs and Slovaks considered him a traitor. In the case of Stepinac, shouldn't the Mihailovic government have asked him to give an account of his conduct during the war? Stepinac had given his benediction to the Ustashi units . . . and with several other members of the episcopacy he had presided over the committee for the conversion of the Orthodox to Catholicism. Stepinac symbolized, to a maximum degree, Croatian clerical chauvinism which could never be resigned to the formation of a Yugoslav State. . . ." [13]

It is timely to refer to the English writer, Avro Manhattan, who describes Croatian separatism before the war: "Croat separatism became an increasingly important factor as the internal and external tension grew. Its identification with Catholicism made it almost a blind tool of the Catholic hierarchy, and thus of the Vatican, which unhesitatingly used it to further, not only its local interests, but also its vaster Balkan schemes of religio-political domination." [14]

An officious opus published in 1943 by Dr. Ivan Guberina, then professor at the Faculty of Theology in Zagreb, contains the following passage: "The true expression of a new Croatia resides in Catholic-Christian principles and not in a few deplorable acts of unworthy individuals." [15] It would be difficult to express more clearly and in fewer words the attitude of the Croatian Catholic church and the obstinate silence of the Holy See before the "deplorable acts" of these "unworthy individuals," many of whom were nothing else but the "dare-devil fanatics" in ecclesiastical ranks mentioned so offhandedly by the Archbishop of Zagreb. Laconically speaking, "the end justifies the means."

However, the Vatican that knew so well how to keep silent before the horrors of the Ustashi regime, was not so taciturn in other circumstances. In 1952, in his encyclical letter *Orientales Ecclesias,* Pius XII vigorously stigmatized the death penalty of the Catholic bishop, Monsignor Bossilkoff, of Nicopolis, in Bulgaria, and three other priests, and condemned, as well, the vexations inflicted upon numerous ecclesiastics and religious

[13] Francois Fejto, *Histoire des Democraties Populaires* (Paris 1952), pp. 360-370.
[14] Avro Manhattan, *op. cit.,* p. 36.
[15] *La formation catholique de la Croatie* (collection *Croatia Sancta,* Rome, 1943). Officium Libri Catholici (with ecclesiastic approval) Zagreb, October 22, 1943, No. 10899-43, prefaced by Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi.

followers. "We consider it a duty of conscience," said the Sovereign Pontiff," to protest against these acts before all Christianity. For us this is an occasion of such profound sadness that we cannot check our tears."

Certainly the condemnations and the vexatious measures of a political regime are deeply regrettable, but neither by their motives nor by their importance can they be compared to the atrocious persecutions to which the Serbian Orthodox and their church were subjected in satellite Croatia. The Holy Father, however, had not considered it "a duty of conscience" to protest to "all Christianity" against these monstrous crimes, and he never shed a tear for the 750,000 victims exterminated by the very Catholic Poglavnik.

How would it be possible to forget the menacing words uttered in 1937 by his predecessor, Pius XI, at the Consistory after the Yugoslav Concordat had been rejected, and which were published in the *Osservatore Romano:* "The day will come when there will be many who will regret not having accepted fully, generously and efficaciously the great blessing offered to their country by Christ's Vicar. . . ."

Among the numerous "Letters from the Readers" addressed to the newspaper *Le Monde* in Paris, the one written by Mr. Andre Barnaud, pastor of the Reformed Church, should also be cited:

> In the issue of *Le Monde* dated Sunday and Monday, the twelfth and thirteenth, you devoted a short article to the religious persecutions which occured during the pontificate of Pius XII and which included a list of the countries, established by the Vatican, where the persecutions had taken place.
>
> As protestants, we now feel a profound compassion for our Catholic brothers who are overcome by sorrow, and I should have preferred that during these days of mourning no mention had been made.
>
> But since the Vatican has issued a list I feel obliged, in the name of Truth, to point out that this list, alas, is far from complete. The Vatican seems to have forgotten an appreciable number. Here, below, are a few others, briefly mentioned, without any reference to the details which were sometimes extraordinarily cruel:
>
> 1. Twenty thousand Spanish protestants are being mistreated if not cruelly persecuted by the Catholic church.
>
> 2. The clergy and Catholic masses in Colombia (South America) a few years ago organized bloody persecutions of the protestants.
>
> 3. In Croatia, during the last war, the Ustashi Catholics massacred thousands of Orthodox Serbs.
>
> To my knowledge no official voice has yet risen up from the very bosom of the sister Church to express any regret or to condemn and

put an end to such horrors. This silence, for which some have reproached the last Pope, seems to us particularly significant as well as incomprehensible.

Are we never to hear this voice? [16]

We wonder if Pope Pius XII, though belatedly, became aware of his omission to condemn the religion of bloodshed, along with Hitlerism and Ustashism as well as some of his other errors which made such a deep breach in the anticommunist front?

Furthermore, there is a passage, following his last will, in which Pope Pius XII added something more than just "une clause de style," in which he expresses remorse regarding his own personal attitude and silence concerning all the events and horrors previously described in this volume: "I humbly request the pardon of those whom I may have offended, harmed, or scandalized by words or deeds." [17]

The world press, at the deathbed of Pius XII, did not fail to refer to his silence regarding the persecutions that have marked our era with shame.

As Mr. Jean d'Hospital wrote in *Le Monde:*

A shadow of uneasiness darkens the memory of Pope Pius XII. We must now ask ourselves, without further delay, and thus bring into the open, a question which many people in every nation, and even within the walls of the Vatican, have been noting on their secret tablets during these past years: did he really know about certain horrors of the war, imposed and carried out under Hitler's orders?

Pope Pius XII had had ample time to read the periodical reports of all the bishops addressed to him from every corner of the world, compiled by the priests who had listened to the confessions in their respective dioceses. How, therefore, could he have remained unaware of what the big German military leaders pretended to ignore; namely the tragedy of the concentration camps, the massacre of enemy military prisoners executed cold-bloodedly, and the terror of the gas chambers where droves of Jews were administratively exterminated?

If he had been aware of all this, why, as guardian and first speaker of the Gospel, did he not go out on the public square, and, clothed in his white robes, his arms crossed, raise his voice in protest?

He never explicitly, forcefully, and definitely denounced Hitler's religion of bloodshed. It is not necessary to exhume all the grandiose pontifical interventions for it would be quite futile. We should not find that for which we were seeking.[18]

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[16] *Le Monde,* October 21, 1958.
[17] *La Croix,* October 12-13, 1958.
[18] *Le Monde,* October 10, 1958.

Chapter X

Ustashi in the Free World

IT HAS already been previously pointed out that it was under the protection of the German army that the Ustashi government fled to Austria and Italy with several thousand executioners, torturers, militants, and functionaries who had been the most compromised. The Archbishop of Sarajevo, Ivan Saric, also belonged to the caravan, as well as the Bishop of Banja Luka, Jozo Garic, who were followed by some 500 priests and members of the Croatian Catholic religious orders.[1]

Trunks of gold and precious treasures, representing an immense fortune, were carried away in this gigantic exodus.

Ante Pavelic and Andrija Artukovic went into hiding at the convents of Saint-Gilgen, near Salzburg, and at Bad-Ischl not far from Linz, in Austria. Pavelic was arrested by the forces of the British occupation but, through a mysterious intervention, was released soon after. This news was explicitly confirmed at the time by Mitar Bakic, general secretary of the Yugoslav government in the following declaration: "In February 1946 the department dealing in war crimes of the American Supreme Command at Wiesbaden, informed our authorities that Pavelic had fallen into the hands of the British somewhere near Celovac (Klagenfurt). But the British authorities refused to allow our officers to take charge of Pavelic." [2]

Feeling that his life was in danger in Austria because of the repeated efforts of the Yugoslav government to capture him, Pavelic reached Rome disguised as a priest. There he lived in a convent, enjoying the right of extratoriality, under the names of Pater Gomez and Pater Benarez. In 1948 he went to Argentina under the false name of Pablo Aranyos, equipped with a passport provided by the International Red Cross, which the priest, Krunoslav Draganovic, procured for him through the *Commissione d'assistanza pontifica.*

Andrija Artukovic, after being released by British occupation troops, lived in Austria until November 1946, when he escaped

[1] The majority of the Croatian Ustashi priests and monks abroad changed their first or last names so they could not easily be identified. Saric died in 1960 in Madrid.

[2] *New York Herald Tribune,* European Edition, Paris, August 16, 1946.

to Switzerland. Once there he was provided with a false passport bearing the name of Alois Anic, procured for him by the priest, Augustin Juretic, at Fribourg. From there he crossed over to Ireland and succeeded in reaching the United States, where he is now living (in Los Angeles, California).

The greater part of the other Ustashi, with the exception of the ecclesiastics, ended up in the camps for German troops. But the Vatican interceded, and the Ustashi were soon separated from the Germans and interned in special camps. Then one day, Krunoslav Draganovic, former Professor at the Faculty of Catholic theology in Zagreb, member of the Committee for the conversion of the Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism, and who had even received the military grade of Lieutenant-Colonel, as a chaplain of the concentration camp of Jasenovac, visited the camps. The Vatican had entrusted him with the direction of the information department for the Balkans, and had put him in charge of protecting the interned Croatian war criminals in the Anglo-American camps.

This work was greatly facilitated by an official pass, which he had been able to obtain, for circulating freely in the Austrian camps of Klagenfurt, Linz, Spital, Vajdmansdorf, Trifling, Volksberg, Trifajah, Glasenbach, Walbach, Tristach, Furnic and Swalbach. This pass also helped him to visit the Croatian priests who had sought refuge in the Franciscan convent of Klagenfurt and Santa Catholica (property owned by the Little Brothers of Klagenfurt), as well as enabling him to visit the Italian camps of Modene, Fermo, Banjoli, Forli, Capua, Rimini, Cento Cele, Comte Ferrata San Paulo di Regola, Grotamare, San Giovanni-Baptist, et al.

A printing press had been set up in the Italian camp at Fermo which sent out propaganda tracts to the emigrants in the camps, and also to Catholic clerical centers in Europe and America. These publications were printed in several languages. The Franciscan monk, Dominik Mandic [3] had charge of buying the machines, the paper, etc. Cardinal Ruffini, accompanied by Croatian and Italian ecclesiastics, visited the camp at Ferno. In his presence, the Franciscan monk, Mandic, a minister of finance for the Yugolav Catholic emigrants, distributed sums for financial aid, after which the Cardinal gave a speech.

[3] Now living in the U.S.A., and writing much of the clero-Ustashi propaganda in Croatian-American papers and periodicals, as well as in books.

Thus saved from extradition to Yugoslavia, and provided with false identity cards, the Ustashi began circulating freely all over the world, organizing committees in Germany, Spain, Austria, Italy, France, Belgium, Canada, the United States, and above all, in Argentina.

With the death of Hitler and Mussolini the dogmas of extermination also disappeared among the German and Italian peoples. Some of the partisans, their hands stained with blood, expiated their crimes; others withdraw into the background, while an incalcuable number took part in clandestine politics. The Croatian racists were, of course, an exception, just as they always had been throughout their racial and religious policy. Either the rest of the world didn't know about their crimes or else it had forgotten them. A good number of the guilty are enjoying complete freedom in the Western world, publishing their newspapers, their reviews and memorandums and their books which are filled with nazi poison and racist harangues.

The Archbishop Ivan Saric (now dead) and Andrija Artukovic (now in Los Angeles), with 500 priests, monks, and thousands of nazi-Ustashi continue to spread their venom of racial and religious hatred. In Spain[4] and the South American countries they are upheld by the dictatorial regimes, while in North America and Canada they pursue their work, thanks to the support of part of the Catholic hierarchy, whose dogma and traditions they had so seriously compromised.

The audacity and arrogance of these racists is such that they are not even aware of the limitations of the laws of the democratic countries upon whose liberality they have imposed. In a book used for Ustashi propaganda, they reproduced 24 different stamps issued under Pavelic and, at the same time the picture of His Eminence Samuel Cardinal Stritch,[5] former Archbishop of Chicago, taken in the midst of a group of Ustashi at Chicago. In this way they hoped to conceal their crimes and subversive acts behind a well-known Catholic name. At this same moment, how-

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[4] The government of General Franco gave its support to the Ustashi in their struggle against the Yugoslav state. In Spain there is a strong Ustashi organization, which was led by the late Archbishop Saric and now by Vjekoslav (Maks) Luburic, former commander of all the concentration camps in satellite Croatia. They are still editing a certain number of newspapers and reviews and have the radio of Madrid at their disposal. By special broadcasts in the Croat language they cultivate hate against the Serbs and the Orthodox Church.

[5] Basil and Stephen Pandzic, *Croatian History* (Chicago, 1954), p. 111-112.

ever, in Germany and in Italy no priest would have dared to be photographed among dictators and assassins.

A great thinker of the past, Zoroaster, wrote a "Prayer for the pardon of Sinners":

All that I ought to have thought
And have not thought,
All that I ought to have said,
And have not said,
All that I ought to have done
And have not done,
All that I ought to have ordered
And have not ordered,
All that I ought not to have thought
And have thought,
All that I ought not to have spoken
And yet have spoken,
All that I ought not to have done
And yet have done,
All that I ought not to have ordered
And yet have ordered;
For thoughts, words, and works,
For all that is spiritual, earthly, and heavenly I pray,
And for forgiveness and repentance.

It is not by repenting that the dead can be brought back to life. But at least the more there are of those who repent, the fewer dead there will be in the future. It is not by repenting that evil can be eliminated from the surface of the earth. But the more there are of those who repent the less evil there will be in the world. Archbishop Saric, instead of praying to the Lord for pardon, only continued committing his innumerable crimes. His "Martyrium Croatiae," which he sent from Madrid, gave ample proof that he had not repented. His paper was the first to publish the nazi harangues and the anti-Christian apostrophes to Hitler's tanks and cannon. None of the Ustashi who once wore uniforms, and who are today in clerical robes, such as Dragutin Kamber, Ivo Omrcanin, Dragutin Kukolja, Dr. Oto Knezovic, Gracijan Brno Raspudic, Vlaho Rajic, T. Mesic, Ante Ciliga, Branimir Jelic, Dr. Buc, Prof. Lukas, Krunoslav Draganovic, Nikola Tojcic, Dr. Cesarich, Vilim Cecelja and others have repented. Instead of repenting, they have slipped into oblivion where they are still continuing their racial ideology in the free world, under the pro-

tection of complete freedom, just as they had done before in the Independent State of Croatia under the protection of Hitler and Mussolini.

Now that their racist masters have been forever silenced, a large number of Ustashi, with their priests and monks, are trying to persuade the free world that the Ustashi were not inspired by racism, but by democracy.[6] At a time when the Germans are showing the German youth traces of the frightful crimes that took place in Hitler's concentration camps, a Croatian high priest is uttering threats of the future extermination of the Serbs. The threats of this Croatian prelate are expressed in a language which even Al Capone would have hardly dared to use.[7]

While the Germans are trying to make amends to the Jews by granting millions in war damages to the State of Israel, the Ustashi newspaper in Chicago, *Danica,* is filled with praise for the deceased Pavelic "who, for four years led a glorious battle against his enemies at home and abroad."

The enemies abroad are in the Western democracies, those at home are the Serbs.

In West Germany the American authorities prohibited, in 1948, a Shakespearean production of "The Merchant of Venice" because of the "pound of flesh" while, at the same time, the Ustashi racists in the U.S.A. are not only demanding a "pound of flesh" but the heads of all the Serbs that did not fall in the death camps.

Although Pope Pius XII protested against the rape of 5 million women by Soviet soldiers in Eastern Germany, he never seems to have worried about protecting the heads and the honor of the Serbs and Jews in Croatia. Even Soviet troops and the hordes of Genghis Khan seldom killed the women who were raped, whereas in Croatia nearly all the Serbian and Jewish women who fell into Ustashi hands were raped, tortured and massacred. The champions of this sinister human history have never denied the past, while in their press and other publications they report that they are ready to pursue any "unfinished business" at the first occasion.

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[6] See for example Theodore Benkovich (priest), *The Tragedy of a Nation* (place and year unknown).

[7] This refers to the Right Reverend Ivan Stipanovic, whose attacks against the Serbs were published and applauded in the newspaper *Hrvatski Glas* (The Croatian Voice), an organ of the Croatian Peasant Party (Winnipeg, Canada), Jan. 29, 1952.

USTASHI PROPAGANDA ABROAD

In order to justify their crimes, and show that betraying Yugoslavia in April 1941 was their duty, the Croatian chauvinists, in their propaganda, give an account of what happened in their own way.

One of the first things the Catholic Croatian ecclesiastics did, on fleeing abroad after the debacle of Pavelic's satellite state, was to send a booklet entitled *Martyrium Croatiae* to the princes of the Catholic church all over the world, just when the consistory was being held at Rome (1946). In this booklet they tried to justify their collaboration with the Ustashi. In this plea, the atrocious regime, which had resorted to bloodshed throughout Croatia between 1941-1945, was explained in a most unpredictable fashion and in a most favorable light. According to these priests and monks, the state was motivated by popular and public desires, "unanimously applauded by the Croats," and not prompted by Hitler and Mussolini, protectors of Ante Pavelic.

As for the killings in which these ecclesiastics had participated, as well as approved, there was only the slightest allusion: "It is clear that the mistakes and errors committed by the Independent State of Croatia, were due to lack of experience."

And by these words they justified four years of frightful massacre.

As for the fanatical clerics, atrocities did not matter just so long as, under a regime of bloodshed, Croatia continued to follow in the path of the traditional "Catholic" states of Europe. It was the dissolution of this "Catholic" state which they deplored. In their opinion, it should have been preserved by changing only "the form of government," for it was the rampart of Catholicism. They believed that existence of the state of Croatia was necessary if the spiritual frontiers of the West were to extend from the Alps to the Bosporus (an unequivocal declaration of political clericalism).

His Grace Rupp, co-adjutator of the Archbishop of Paris, meant exactly that when he stressed "the strategic importance of Croatia in the struggle for Christian unity." [8]

That 750,000 Orthodox Serbs were systematically massacred to

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[8] In his preface to the book, *Le Dossier du Cardinal Stepinac*, by R. P. Theodore Dragun (Paris, 1958).

safeguard this "strategic" position of the Roman Church was evidently of no importance to those who held high positions.

On the other hand, the authors of *Martyrium Croatiae,* and the Ustashi Ivo Omrcanin (who was inspired by it when he wrote his German booklet) [9] found it somewhat reprehensible that a number of Catholic Croatian priests had been killed during the struggle between the Ustashi and the resistance forces or the Yugoslav army. Yet when it is understood what part the Catholic Croatian clergy played in the extermination of the Orthodox and the Jews, there is little reason to be astonished at the reprisals.

The same exclusivism, the same prejudices, are obvious in the memorandum concerning the persecution of which the Roman Church is a victim in Communist countries. On reading the numerous lamentations of the "Church of Silence," one might be led to think that the atheistic governments were only using Catholicism as their target, whereas the Communists are known to make no distinction between religions, considering them all as "opiates of the people." No religion enjoys any special privilege. The Orthodox Church was put in the same basket as the Roman Church, yet the latter refused to acknowledge this fact.

Indeed, the *Martyrium Croatiae,* in its attempt to clear the Croatian Catholic clergy of any guilt concerning the crimes committed under the Ustashi regime, constitutes a manifesto of Croatian separatism, based on politico-clerical motives, and an appeal for the disintegration of the Yugoslav state. The priests who signed it were not afraid of appealing to President Eisenhower to try to obtain his support. Through the intermediary of Cardinals Stritch and Spellman, a delegation of these priests were received at the White House June 15, 1959. In this memorandum we can read this bizarre phrase which aims to deceive even President Eisenhower: "We take the opportunity to correct the prevailing erroneous opinion that the Axis Powers brought the Independent State of Croatia into existence."

One of the signers of this memorandum was the Franciscan Gracijan, alias Brno Raspudic. In his book *Djevojka Drina* (Drina Girl),[10] he revealed the psychology of these ecclesiastics by writing: "The enemy should be made to retreat into the shadows of

[9] *Kroatische Priester ermordert von Tschetniken und Kommunisten* (Munchen, 1959).

[10] Gracijan Raspudic, *Djevojka Drina* (Madrid, 1951), "cum licentia Superiorum."

darkness where there could be no hope for resurrection. You must become dangerous; that is the only solution." (see pp. 99-155).

"The crusaders with their faith in God and in the machine guns were on the march." (P. 185.)

The Croatian emigre paper, *Hrvatska Zora* (The Croatian Dawn) described the signatories of this memorandum as "victims of passion and hate," and as a conclusion wrote: "The priests who signed the memorandum are infected right to the marrow with a modern disease called "blind ego-centric nationalism, an exclusive nationalism. This malady is leading Europe to the edge of the precipice. . . ." [11]

But any lucidity, any attempt at moderation and charity could hardly be expected of these ecclessiastics, capable only of hate and pursuing an objective which would only widen the abyss between the people of the same race.

By such action they will not only offend God and man, but dangerously expose all the Croatian people, of whom they claim to be the qualified representatives.

In Germany, the name of Hitler has become a symbol of evil, whereas these people maintain that the name of Ante Pavelic should be glorified throughout the free world "as the personification of resolution and heroism," [12] whose example the Croatian people should follow wherever they may be living. In Europe the racist movement seems to have been stifled, yet in the meanwhile, the Ustashi press sings the praises of Pavelic for having founded the Ustashi Croatian Movement for Freedom.[13] According to the statutes of the United Nations and the criminal laws of the free world, great criminals should be held responsible for their crimes, yet the Ustashi press in the free world glorifies Ante Pavelic, whom the Croatian people (according to this press) judge worthy to be interred "in the Croatian Pantheon to immortalize his fame." [14]

No one knows where the graves of the great criminals of Nuremberg are today; their ashes have been doubtless scattered to the four winds so they will not contaminate the country, but the body of Ante Pavelic, the worst assassin of them all, will have an honored place in the Croatian Pantheon. In Europe, at the

[11] *Hrvatska Zora* (Munich), September 1, 1954.
[12] *Danica* (organ of Croatian Franciscans) (Chicago), January 6, 1960.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*

beginning of the year 1960, all those who painted the swastikas on the walls and the doors of the synagogues were condemned to prison. Yet hundreds and thousands of living Ustashi swastikas, most of them in clerical robes, are haranguing and writing freely about staining their habits once again with the blood of the innocent. Neither the law concerning the press in the U.S.A., nor the forbidding of totalitarian terrorist activities on one side, nor the fact that the Serbs are far more numerous and much stronger than the Croats, whose provocation they might eventually incite, had any influence whatsoever on this criminal and subversive people. The Croats' provocations have no end, and their propaganda has no beginning and no end. Such is the state of spirit of all incorrigibles.

The Ustashi propaganda is aimed, above all, at the Orthodox Church. George W. Cesarich[15] writes that "the Serbian Orthodox Church educates her people in the worship of assassins, patricides and conquerors," although this church never practiced forced conversions, nor did it massacre members of other faiths. John Clinton Adams, an American scholar, examining the Ustashi propaganda, commented on the book of Cesarich by saying: "The author does not even mention the fact that the 'Independent Kingdom of Croatia' was created by Hitler and Mussolini after their conquest of Yugoslavia and was a fascist dictatorship allied with the Axis against us. The book has no value except as a specimen of propaganda of the worst Balkan tradition. As a sort of final impudence the bibliography lists four works by that fugitive from a war-crime tribunal, the former Fuhrer of Croatia, Ante Pavelich himself." [16]

That is the way that the Ustashi and Croatian chauvinists write "their history."

And thus the Ustashi writers and their protectors of the free world invented the story "that there were no forced conversions in Croatia, and that the Orthodox had asked to be converted to Catholicism,[17] and also that no pogroms took place because it was a war between equals, or, better yet, a war in self-defense to which the Croats had every right." An armed nation in "self-defense" against empty handed children, women and old men?

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[15] *Croatia and Serbia* (Chicago, 1954), p. 59.

[16] *Journal of Central European Affairs,* XVI (April, 1956), p. 100.

[17] His Grace Stepinac estimates that 240,000 of those converted to Catholicism returned to the Orthodox Church, thus proving the pressure that had been brought to bear.

Dr. Krunoslav Draganovich, professor of theology, also mentions "legal self-defense." [18] The way in which Croatian "historians" interpret "legal self-defense" has been shown throughout this volume. But every scholar can find the documents in the archives of the trial at Nuremberg, where the great war criminals were convicted, and see for himself how Croatians look upon "self-defense."

All Ustashi publications abound with the same logic. The naïve pretext about "legitimate self-defense" is usually the theme adopted by those who are well armed for pogroms and massacres that have been well prepared in advance. The public has already been informed by the press, the government, and by the Church, with accompanying songs of praise, promotions and decorations. The vestiges of destroyed villages, the vast cemeteries, and the testimonies of those who are still living are an obvious proof. All these vestiges can be found on the Serbian and Jewish sides but not on the side of the Croats.

Another argument which the Ustashi and even some other Croats uphold abroad is that "General Mihailovich had ordered the extermination of the Croats and had stirred up vengeance and collective massacres in Croatia." [19] But during his trial by Tito's government no such insinuation was even pronounced in the accusation, and the Communists would not be apt to leave such a thing out if there was even any suspicion of such a thing. Moreover, at General Mihailovic's headquarters there was also a Croatian corps with a Croatian general, Matija Parac, at the head. And Croats and Serbs have been living mingled together for centuries in Croatia, and they have never in their whole history been at war with each other. The hate that has spread amid the population was sown and cultivated by the spiritual and lay racists of Rome and Berlin. Even during the most terrible massacres in satellite Croatia, the great majority of Croatian peasants did not participate in the crimes. It is estimated that a small percentage of the peasants were compromised during the Ustashi regime, while the percentage among the clergy rose, to the disgrace of Christianity, to more than 50%. Consequently, the Serbs never even thought of the collective responsibility of the Croats. General Milhailovic, in an address in the village of Ba (January 27, 1944), clearly emphasized that the official courts of

[18] Krunoslav Draganovich, *The Croatian Nation,* p. 293-296.
[19] Pavle Ostovic, *The Truth about Yugoslavia* (New York, 1952), p. 215.

Yugoslavia would judge the crimes committed during the pogroms, and not seek vengeance. General Mihailovic expressed this same idea before 270 American flyers in his headquarters at Ravna Gora.[20] These flyers he rescued and sent to their homes in America, while Pavelic's Croatia was in a state of war with the U.S.A.

The thesis of collective responsibility and vengeance was invented by the Croatian Catholic ecclessiastics and racists in order to keep Serbs and Croats in permanent hostility, through hate and fear. The Serbs, on the contrary, harbor no hard feelings concerning collective vengeance against the innocent, nor do they harbor vengeance against the members of the Croatian Catholic Church.

Consequently *responsibility* and *collective vengeance* are not terms used by the Serbs. On the contrary, they are terms found in the tactical propaganda of the Croatian Ustashi wearing robes of black and of brown.

In Ustashi propaganda abroad can be read the following paragraph: "The Croatian people magnificently conspired to aid the Jews, and it is estimated that the Jews were able to save 80% of all their property and goods. . . . While there were Jews in the concentration camps, more for their own protection . . . the Croatians were absolutely against any persecution measures against their Jewish brethren. Perhaps no Catholic bishop so energetically and vehemently denounced German anti-semitism as did Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac of Zagreb." [21]

The author of this statement relates this story in referring to "a servant of the God of Truth . . . whom God in his Infinite Wisdom has ordered to be the witness." [22] But in all totalitarian countries there were Jews who survived; even in Germany where they were treated as slaves, as *things,* not human beings. Yet in totalitarian Croatia not one of the 60,000 who remained under the Pavelic government survived, save those who fled to the forests or those who went to join Mihailovic's or Tito's forces. Of the others, no Jew was spared, but each one killed according to the law of November 1942.[23]

[20] For General Mihailovic's speech see *Knjiga o Drazi* (The book about Draza) by Radoje Knezevich, (Windsor, Canada, 1957), Vol. 2, pp. 8-9.

[21] Theodore Benkovich, *op. cit.,* pp. 29-30.

[22] *Idem.,* Introduction.

[23] This law was signed by Andrija Artukovic, who is now living in freedom in Los Angeles.

This was the true state of affairs in satellite Croatia between 1941-1945 when it was governed by executioners in clerical robes and the Ustashi. The Vatican complained that the Cardinal of Vienna, Dr. Innitzer, made the fascist salute with a "Heil Hitler." Cardinal Tisserant complained against Father Simic and the Franciscans of Bosnia for setting fire to the churches and massacring the innocent. His Grace Stepinac, however, kept silent and stigmatized none. The blood of the innocent was shed and it stained the hands of the priests who co-operated with the apocalyptic executioners during the reign of terror and the conversions to Catholicism. Hundreds of them became officers and were cited and decorated and were assigned positions with the executioners and made commanders in the concentration camps. Reports were published by the government organizations and the hierarchy. Dozens of reviews and branches of the archbishopric sang the praises of Hitler, Mussolini, Pavelic, and the New Europe.

The roll of this sinister thunder, reported and broadcast by the radio, could not possibly have reached the ears of Cardinal Tisserant without also being heard by His Grace Stepinac at Zagreb. It is strange that he could look on quietly while hundreds and thousands of innocent victims, babies included, were massacred by people who blasphemed God, Christ, Justice, and Liberty.

"Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God," said Jefferson. Yet His Grace Stepinac, along with the majority of his priests, paid no heed to this statement. All contemplated the crimes calmly or could be seen in the clerical robes of the Order of St. Francis as leaders of the cutthroats whose crimes Cardinal Tisserant was so well acquainted with. Recalling the words of this Cardinal, we should compare it with the prayer of St. Francis of Assissi, who would certainly have denied such disciples:

> Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace!
> Where there is hatred let me sow love;
> Where there is injury, pardon;
> Where there is doubt, faith;
> Where there is despair, hope;
> Where there is darkness, light,
> And where there is sadness, joy.
> O Divine Master, grant that I may
> Not so much seek to be consoled as
> To console; to be understood as to

Understand; to be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born
To eternal life.—Amen

What a difference between this holy saint of heaven and his Croatian disciples! And what a misfortune for him and for humanity that his order is associated with the frightful cut-throats of the twentieth century to the shame of Croatia, to the great sin of the Croatian Catholic clergy, and to the great misery of the Serbs.

The Jesuit, Dr. Dragutin Kamber, with whom we are now well acquainted, protesting against the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which recognized the Yugoslavia formed in 1918, in a letter to his "American friends," wrote: "Dear American friends, may you be sure that we prefer harmony and peace in the world and we disdain greatly to be any kind of troublemakers. But we must continue the fight against the killers and destroyers of our people, and therefore we cannot drop our claims for a Croatian state, on the beautiful eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, at the doorstep of the Balkans, near the Danube River. . . . It should not be forgotten so fast that the mistakes committed in dealing with that area in the first half of our century have had catastrophic consequences for the entire world." [24]

Reading between the lines, it would appear that they were all as gentle as lambs, Rev. Dr. Kamber included, for it was he, who in times gone by, sowed Death and Terror throughout Bosnia under Pavelic's Ustashi, representing the Prefect of Police at Doboj and the Ustashi Colonel. Furthermore, he threatened that the pogroms of 1941-1945 might be repeated if the U.S.A. did not uphold the "Just Cause" of these persecutors. Considering American ethics and laws, this is indeed a strange turn of affairs.

It should be remembered that in 1941 Dr. Dragutin (Charles) Kamber never wrote letters to "American Friends" but to the Hitlerian hordes.

USTASHI SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES AND COLLUSION WITH THE REVISIONISTS

The center of their activities in Germany in Munich was

[24] Dr. Dragutin Kamber, "To our American friends—Why a Croatian Independent State," published in his *The Croatian Nation* (Chicago, 1955), p. 418.

called "Hrvatski Narodni Odbor" (The Croatian National Committee) Branimir Jelic and Stjepan Buc are at the head of this organization (they are already known from the time of the first Ustashi emigration). This same committee published the newspaper *Hrvatska Drzava* (The Croatian State).

The Ustashi in Germany are in close touch with the remnants of the German national minorities who fled with the Hitlerian troops because of their collaboration and the crimes committed against the Serbs and the Jews.*

In Rome it is the Institute of Saint Jerome which serves as the center of Ustashi activities among the Croatian clergy, under the direction of Krunoslav Draganovic.

In Paris, the Croatian Ustashi are grouped within the syndicate Croatian Workmen (Hrvatski Radnicki Savez), affiliated with the "Confederation Francaise des Travailleurs Chretiens" (French Confederation of Christian Trade Unionists). They publish a bulletin called *Hrvatski Radnik* (The Croatian Worker). They have some other organization such as "Alois Stepinac," "Stjepan Radic," "Dzafer Kulenovic," "Hrvatska Narodna Odbrana" (The Croatian Defense), "Hrvatski Narodni Odbor" and "Sredisnji Odbor Hrvatskih Drustava u Evropi" (Central Committee of Croatian Societies in Europe), a recent organization grouping all societies of Croatian separatists in Europe.

The French writer, Georges Oudard, recently wrote two remarkable articles in the weekly paper *Carrefour* about the subversive activities of the Ustashi in France. In it we can read these lines:

> The Ustashi manifestation which took place at the Etoile, in April 1957, revealed even more audacity and perfidy. The Committee of the Torch had not realized that the day it had requested for laying the crown of flowers on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in the name of a phantom Croatian association, was the Sunday that was nearest to the anniversary date of the founding of the puppet state which was being celebrated at the Arch of Triumph by the Ustashi who had come with their flag. The homage rendered to the Unknown Soldier by a few of the destroyers of Europe . . . was revoltingly insolent. The military governor of Paris, warned at the last minute of the trap that had been set, justifiably abstained from participating in this profanation to which he had been so audaciously invited.
>
> On the contrary, on December 21, 1958, a new manifestation took place with great *éclat* at the church of Sainte-Odile at the Porte Champeret, under the patronage of the "Catholic Movement for

* In Klagenfurt, Austria, Ustashi organized themselves a society named *Velebit*.

Unity," which had let itself become involved without realizing the significance of the curious adventure on which it had embarked. The ceremony was officially announced as "A homage to Stepinac" but there was little mention given to him and it all turned out to be a sort of glorification of Croatian separatism.

In the crypt the colors of Ante Pavelic's state were borne on high, while the lads from Grom and the Commander of the section, representing the patriotic defense of the Croatian National Committee, took over the policing on the sidewalks of the Avenue Stephane-Mallarme, the buttonholes of their lapels decorated with the insignia which appears here above [in the French publication]. His Grace Rupp, national director of Catholic emigration, presided over this reunion where the most vehement eloquence reigned. After Mr. Ernest Pezet, who was then vice-president of the Senate, had talked for sometime about himself, he started a savage attack against our old Serbian allies and their church. At that point R. P. Dragun, took up the subject of a petition sent to President Eisenhower in 1954, advocating a sort of holy crusade, more against the Orthodox Serbs than against communism, and expressed the desire of witnessing the rebirth of the Croatian State. He was exultant just so long as he thought that there were those among the congregation who thought that an Austrian priest had forgotten that he was preaching in a French sanctuary and not at the bosom of the Ustashi Croatian national Committee at Billancourt. His Grace Rupp, in the sermon which he preached during the mass that followed, deemed it necessary to emphasize that the orators were personally responsible for their words.

The success of such an incredible meeting swelled the heads of the organizers of these manifestations to such an extent, that, losing all restraint and caution, they got out a mimeographed circular with the following text: "Invitation for the eighteenth anniversary of the founding of the Croatian State. The Croatian Workmens' Federation is organizing an important meeting on Sunday, April 19, 1959, at three o'clock in Hall No. 2 of the C.F.T.C. (French Confederation of Christian Workers) at rue Montbolon, Paris, 9eme, Metro Cadet.

The ceremony will begin with holy mass at the Church of Notre Dame de Lorette, 6 bis rue Choron, Metro 'Le Peletier' Paris 9 eme, at 12:30.

A buffet lunch will be served after the service.

Long live the anniversary of the founding of the Croatian State.

Death to the Serbs and to the Communists, the greatest enemies of the Croatian people.

Directing Committee of the Workers' Croatian Federation."

This ignominous notice, where an appeal for prayer is associated with murder, and the promise of being well fed in the meantime, was the cause of much protestation. Incidents occurred at the door of the church. This infamous commemoration was prohibited the night before by the Prefecture of the Police, but the affair was not carefully looked into.

HOW THE YUGOSLAV MISSION WAS NULLIFIED

There was once a Yugoslav mission in France with a Slovene priest, Mr. Nace Cretnik, at the head. It was sub-divided into three Slovene missions and a Croatian mission, run by R. P. Dragun under the auspices of Mr. Cretnik.

On August 16, 1954, the French government sent a note to the secretary of the Vatican requesting that the nomination of foreign missionaries be submitted for approval. Cardinal Piazza, secretary of the Consistory, replied that an organization for emigrants essentially spiritual and wearing political colors seemed impossible. He added that in case of any incidents he would not hesitate to intervene immediately and reiterated that missionaries who meddled with political questions were strictly forbidden. This was a policy which his successor, Cardinal Mimmi, agreed with.

How, under these conditions, did R. P. Dragun, who is an Austrian citizen of Croatian origin, manage to suppress the Yugoslav Mission in France of which there is no trace in the *Ordo* diocese of Paris, and transform his mission into an outrageous separatist and national enterprise in contradiction with the universalism of the Catholic Church, the spirit of the Constitution *Exsul Familia,* and the guarantees given to the French government by Cardinal Piazza?

We would never have questioned this apostolic foundation, which is usually regarded with such respect, if the nullification of the Yugoslav mission, fomented by this singular monk, had not been of a strictly political character.

Dragun execrates the Serbs, and his greatest desire is to have Yugoslavia disappear from the map of Europe, just as the Mission disappeared from the *Ordo*. He does not conceal this fact.

In 1954, his name could be found among those who signed the petition to President Eisenhower, asking him to destroy Yugoslavia and resuscitate the Independent State of Croatia. This absurd undertaking masked the real intentions of its promoters under the pretext that Tito was trying to force the Croatian Catholics to become Orthodox. In this case the guilty ones who had committed the inverted crime were posing as protectors of the persecuted faith, but the reasons they gave would not stand examining. Yugoslav communism is atheistic by definition and is hostile to all faiths, barring none. The real truth, quite different from those invented, is that Tito is more afraid of the Catholic Church than the Serbian church which, in the end, has become his prisoner.

The objective aimed at by this petition was to interest American opinion in the cause of separatism, while giving the impression that the Church was at stake, and to convince all those who were gullible. The tactics which Dragun has adopted at home is identical and has already proved successful, since, as can be seen, last year a French prelate took part, without knowing it, in a ceremony that was underhandedly organized by the Ustashi.[25]

[25] Georges Oudard, "Les Oustachis a Paris" (The Ustashi in Paris), *Carrefour* (Paris), September 23 and 30, 1959.

The Ustashi in France are sponsored by Mgr. Rupp, assistant of the archbishop of Paris, and Ernest Pezet, former vice-president of the Senate.

In England the Ustashi are members of the Moslem Society of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Denholm, Bratford). Their activity is also manifested through the Croatian Benevolent Society of Great Britain (*Hrvatsko Dobrotvorno Drustvo za Veliku Britaniju*) whose chairman is Nikola Hundric, former member of the Ustashi parliament.

The Ustashi in England publish the paper *Nova Hrvatska* (The New Croatia), directed by Andrea Ilic, London.

In the near East the most active center is at Damascus. Its paper is *Hrvatska Volja* (The Croatian Will).

In Belgium, Janko Vranicani sponsored the organization and brought it the support of Belgian Catholic circles.

In Spain an Ustashi group also works freely for Croat separatism, with the benevolent assistance of some Spanish authorities. They are also aided by the Catholic lay organization, *Opus dei,* whose influence is considerable, both in public life and in government. It was in Madrid that the poet, Ivan Saric, Archbishop of Sarajevo, was found once again, accompanied by his co-worker Vjekoslav-Maks Luburic, former commander of the concentration camps of satellite Croatia, where he is known by the name of "Drinjanin," and where he is now supporting a semi-military organization and publishing a paper *Drina.*

We have seen that Franco's government has even made Radio Madrid available to the Ustashi. Once a week, a certain Pavao Tijan addresses the Croatian population for the purpose of keeping alive the separatist spirit on the home front, dazzling them with the ideal of an Independent State of Croatia.

In the U.S.A., a center of activity was founded in the convent of the Croatian Franciscans in Chicago (4851 Drexel Boulevard). It has its own press and publishes a weekly paper called *Danica* (The Morning Star), *Nasa Nada* (Our Hope) and the *Croatia Press.* Approximately 76 priests and monks reached the U.S.A. after the debacle of the satellite state. Here they began a relentless propaganda against the Yugoslav state and the Orthodox Serbs while distorting historical facts and events. Unfortunately, in America, they have found appreciable moral and material support in some Catholic circles.

In Argentina, the Ustashi have several organizations and pub-

lications: *Hrvatska Drzava, Glas sv. Antuna, Hrvatska Revija.* Under the dictatorship of Peron, this was their most active center as well as that of all the other war criminals who had sought refuge outside of Europe.

The multiple Ustashi organizations abroad are not only active in carrying on propaganda but also subversive action in foreign lands, as well as in Yugoslavia. Their activities are aimed much more at the destruction of the Yugoslav state than they are at the destruction of communism.

It is needless to add that the terrorist activity and genocide on the part of the Croatian Catholic clergy in Yugoslavia made communism more possible in that country rather than the reverse.

In order to guard the trust and confidence of the western world, whose policy is concentrated on the struggle against communism, the Ustashi emigrants and the Croatian clericals pose as innocent victims of the communists and as defenders of western democracy for which they had shed their blood for five years during the last world war. They were most astute in making their aspirations seem analogous, and along the same general lines as followed by the policy of the free world.

But in the countries where they have found refuge under the guise of anti-communists they have really been working for the separatist cause and against the Yugoslav state in general, and against the Serbs in particular, with the purpose of eventually detaching Croatia and incorporating it in an eventual Danubian confederation.

With this idea in mind, they have been collaborating closely with the partisan revisionists for the destruction of the status quo in western and central Europe. Among the most active of these organizations are the propaganda centers of Otto Habsburg, the principal ones being: *Abendlandische Akademie* at Munich, *Forchungs-institut fur Fragen des Donauraumes* at Salsburg and *Centre Europeo de Documentatio.* In these propaganda centers are some of the noted Catholic leaders of Europe and America, who, with large sums at their disposal, are exerting strong political influence.

Otto Habsburg thought he could profit from the existing division of the world into two camps, with two opposing political systems, for the realization of his plan for a "Danubian confederation" by playing up the inevitability of a war between

the Slavic East and the non-Slavic West. The Slav East, having sunk into communism, Otto Habsburg and his partisans hope they will be helped by the western democracies. The downfall of communism, he believes, will result in the downfall of the status quo in eastern and central Europe, established by the treaties of Versaille, St. Germain and Trianon, and that on the ruins of these national states and in the interest of the "European balance of power," and in the interest of a "Christian and western civilization," the Danubian Confederation, under the sceptre of the Habsburgs, will be realized.

Needless to say, these ideas are extremely dangerous since changing the status quo in central and eastern Europe can not be accomplished without warfare. But the plan is, above all, anti-Slav, and because of this, there is danger of alienating all the Slavs, thus helping the communists.

Otto Habsburg, in order to promote his idea, has based it on federalism, so much in vogue at the moment, and he envisages a Danubian confederation which might in a way be integrated into the United States of Europe. But everyone knows that the idea of democratic federalism is, by its very nature, incompatible with the resurrection of the Habsburg monarchy.

Unfortunately, this revisionism in central and eastern Europe has been encouraged, if not conceived, by none other than Winston Churchill. In the first pages of his Memoirs of the War he writes: "The second major tragedy of this epoch is the complete disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire."

Since the prestige of Sir Winston Churchill is so impressive, this idea of regretting the disappearance of the archaic Austro-Hungarian empire has found in certain classes some adherents, although the resurrection of this empire is absolutely contrary to the interests and desires of the Slavic peoples of Europe and the Balkans, as well as to the maintenance of peace in the European democracies.

Wickham Steed, in his excellent study, *The Doom of the Hapsburgs,* was also of our opinion concerning the Habsburg empire: "If, in a sense it had appealed to the sword and perished by the sword, its fate was determined in advance by the persistent amorality of the dynastic principle, which its rulers alone respected. Before any armistice could be signed, the Habsburg Monarchy had dissolved itself into its component parts. Even the Austrian Germans and Magyars had set up independent

republics and repudiated the Emperor and King. The doom of the Habsburgs was accomplished."[26]

It should also be noted that Otto Habsburg found adherents in the ecclesiastical circles of the U.S.A., as might be expected, as well as in the financial and industrial world.

As we have already pointed out, of all Yugoslavs abroad, it was the Ustashi alone who joined the Habsburgs. Thus we find the Croatian fascists and the old oppressors of nationalities working together, with the same "lofty policy" in mind for the European area.

DEATH OF PAVELIC AND STEPINAC

The decease, within a six-week interval, of Ante Pavelic and Cardinal Stepinac, brought back into the limelight the ephemeral existence of the state which lasted only four years, but years which were so filled with horror they will go down in history as a frightful example of what can be engendered by political clericalism.

Ante Pavelic died December 26, 1959, in Madrid, where he had found refuge in a Franciscan monastery after his return from Argentina. The Holy See still continued protecting this "unpunished massacrer," which accounts for his spending his last days in peace among the "Brothers" of those who, heretofore, had given him precious help in exterminating the Orthodox Serbs, an item which the pious press felt it might be inopportune to recall.

The monthly newspaper *Hrvatska* (Croatia), in its number dated February 1960, published *"The official report of the death of Poglavnik Pavelic"* which is worded as follows:

> Madrid: The office of the Poglavnik has given the following communique concerning the death of the Poglavnik of the Independent State of Croatia:
>
> The Poglavnik of the Independent State of Croatia left Argentina July 23, 1957, by the frontier town of Rio Gallegos (Patagonia) and on July 24, 1957, reached Punta Arenas in Chili. He stayed four months in Santiago, and then left for Spain, arriving in Madrid Nov. 29, 1957.
>
> During the months of November and December 1959, the Poglavnik submitted to medical treatment in the German hospital at Madrid.
>
> On December 18, 1959, the Franciscan priest, Miquel Maric, heard the Poglavnik's confession, while the Rev. Franciscan priest administered the holy sacraments on the same day.

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[26] Henry Wickham Steed, *The Doom of the Hapsburgs*, London, 1936, p. 95.

On December 27, the Rev. Franciscan priest, Branko Maric, administered the last sacraments. The same day His Holiness Pope John XXIII gave his personal benediction.[27]

The death of his collaborator, Alois Stepinac, on February 10, 1960, whom Pope Pius XII had made a Cardinal, aroused a powerfully orchestrated concert of lamentation and praise in every Catholic country. International funeral services were held in honor of the "martyr" who was interred in the cathedral at Zagreb.

The man who wrote, in 1941: "Hitler has been sent by God," and who assiduously upheld the Ustashi regime, will, hereafter, wear a halo and be canonized.

However, public opinion is vigilant. Below is the reaction felt by Ernest Lamber from Paris concerning the death of Cardinal Stepinac, which appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune* (European edition) on Feb. 10th, 1960:

> It is indeed strange to read (Feb. 10th) that Cardinal Stepinac "defied" the puppet government by attacking German doctrines.
>
> Stepinac never defied the Fascist Croatian Government, known as the Ustashi, but is recognized as having collaborated with this regime.
>
> The puppet state of Croatia was proclaimed under the egis of Hitler and Mussolini on April 10th, 1941, and on Easter Day, 1941, Archbishop Stepinac announced from his pulpit, in the cathedral of Zagreb, the foundation of this state.
>
> In his pastoral letter of April 28th, 1941, he endorsed the Ustashi regime when he wrote: "knowing the men who today hold the fate of the Croatian people in their hands, we are firmly convinced that our effort is understood and wholeheartedly supported."
>
> Stepinac knew very well that these men were none other than Ante Pavelic and Andrija Artukovic, the well-known pre-war terrorists. They were profiting from German domination in their Croatian state to found a homogeneous Croatia from an ethnical and religious standpoint by massacring Serbs, Jews, Tziganes; 289 Orthodox churches and monasteries were destroyed and burnt, once the women and children had been locked inside. Three bishops and 182 priests were killed.
>
> Stepinac never condemned these multiple crimes. Furthermore, he never dissociated himself from a large part of the clergy who were actively collaborating with the Ustashi regime.
>
> That Stepinac "was threatened with death" is far from being a historical truth. Up until the very end of the Ustashi regime he remained *persona grata*. Proofs abound. In June, 1944, we can see His

[27] This communique was also printed in the monthly Croatian newspaper *Hrvatska Zora* (Croatian Dawn), Munich, March 1960.

Grace Stepinac in a photograph which appeared in the *Hrvatski Narod* newspaper (The Croatian People) No. 1051 of June 4, 1944, blessing the Ustashi military units. In 1944, His Grace was decorated with the highest Ustashi distinction, accompanied by the most eloquent praise, "having, as Archbishop, denounced the rebels on the territory of the Croatian state, not only in the country but in foreign lands." And those rebels were the ones who had been proscribed by the Nazi doctrine, and who were struggling, weapons in hand, against the Nazi and Facist oppressors.

The Gospel itself teaches us that only by Truth may man be saved.

UNPUNISHED CRIMINALS

And what could be said of Justice? Nothing, except that it had been put soundly to sleep. Thousands of executioners and torturers, commanders of concentration camps, Nazi ministers, Fascists and Ustashi, escaped punishment. And yet the photographer who took the Fuhrer's picture was condemned at Nuremberg to ten years in prison just for having committed such a crime as photographing Hitler.

As for the French governments since the liberation, not one even formulated a demand for Pavelic's extradition, although he had been condemned to death in 1935 by the criminal court in Aix-en-Provence, for the assassination of King Alexander and Louis Barthou at Marseille.

Andrija Artukovic, who emigrated to the United States under the false name of Alois Anic, has been living for several years under an indictment for extradiction demanded by the Yugoslav government, but thanks to his protectors in Catholic circles he has, until now, escaped any explanation for his crimes. All the favorable articles written about him by the Croatian and American ecclesiastics are well remembered, and there is absolute proof that Catholic circles of Los Angeles organized various benefits in order to raise funds to defend Andrija Artukovic from the extradition.

At the trial of Adolf Eichmann, responsible for extirpating 6,000,000 Jews, the responsibility of Andrija Artukovic for the annihilation of Jews and Orthodox Serbs in Pavelic's State of Croatia, was shown. The press of the whole world wrote about it extensively. Here we shall quote two large American dailies which wrote the following about his responsibility:

"Alexander Arnon, wartime secretary of the Jewish community in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, brought up the name of Andrija Artuko-

vic, Minister of Interior in the Nazi-sponsored Croatian Government headed by Ante Pavelic.

The prosecution has submitted several documents relating to Artukovic, whose extradition, at the request of Yugoslavia, was recently refused by the United States.

'Where is he now?' Judge Benjamin Halevi asked the witness.

'Today he is either in New York or California,' said Mr. Arnon.

Artukovic was reported to have been working as a bookkeeper in Los Angeles in May, 1951.

Judge Halevi continued, 'And he executed anti-Jewish measures on orders from Germany?'

'I can't say directly that this was according to German orders because I have no proof for it,' the witness replied. 'But this was after all common knowledge at the time.' "

(*The New York Times,* May 20, 1961, by Homer Bigart, correspondent from Jerusalem for the Eichmann trial.)

"Adolf Eichmann and his SS colleagues were linked today to the wholesale exterminations of Jews in Yugoslavia. A witness (Alexander Arnon) testified that 60,000 of its 75,000 Jews were murdered.

In addition, the witness estimated that several hundred thousands of Serbs were killed, but he did not blame these murders on Eichmann.

The witness depicted the activities of the Ustashi, Fascist collaborators, in helping in the Nazi persecutions and he told how concentration camps were set up and the killings started.

He said at the Jadovno camp 20,000 Jews were killed and at the Stara Gradiska Camp women and children were imprisoned.

At the same time, the witness testified the destruction of synagogues was going on.

In June of that year trains were running daily and nightly to the fairgrounds in Zagreb where Jews were being concentrated. He said there were no protests against this and added:

'Croatia was a Catholic state and the Catholic Church in Croatia did not raise its voice and did not say a word in protest.' "

(*New York Herald Tribune,* May 20-21, 1961, Continental Edition, by Robert S. Bird, report from Jerusalem.)

* * *

In vain, emigrant Serbian leaders addressed a memorandum

to the United Nations in 1950 condemning the crimes and the genocide of the Ustashi:

> It is certainly incompatible with public and international morality that Ustashi criminals, even after the collapse of Nazism and Fascism, should continue to circulate freely in the world and continue openly and cynically to threaten new outrages when "their hour" shall return.
>
> It is necessary, therefore, that the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization in a special resolution set up a Commission for investigating the Ustashi crimes of genocide and call upon its member nations to facilitate the work of this Commission on the spot.
>
> Such a measure on the part of the United Nations Organization would demonstrate that the Convention on genocide is not just a gesture for misleading world opinion but an expression of a serious determination to put an end to such crimes. This cannot be achieved if the crimes already committed are not brought to trial and punished.
>
> The United Nations Organization could, by such action, fortify and reassure the moral conscience of humanity which was enormously shaken by the horrible events which accompanied the last world war.[28]

The Serbian National Defense Council of America has published a declaration on the crime of genocide committed by the Croatian Ustashi.

Below are a few excerpts from this declaration, cited by the Honorable Herbert H. Lehman, senator from New York, during the session of the U. S. Senate, October 20, 1951:

> It is inconceivable that civilization can survive if the world is to allow nations, races and religious groups to be exterminated. This world must be made safe for a diversity of nations, religions, races and cultures.
>
> Genocide has destroyed some 20,000,000 persons in the last fifty years—the world must face the problem of genocide in the twentieth century.
>
> While the nineteenth century was marked by the liberation of the individual and his entrance into political life, as well as by a strong movement of national liberation which helped many nations to achieve their unity and independence, the twentieth century is a century in which collective violence directed not so much against men in their individual capacity, but against entire nations, races and religious groups has become typical. . . .
>
> Therefore, the world should now focus its primary attention on

[28] Adam Pribicevic, Dr. Vladimir Belajcic and Dr. Branko Miljus, *Memorandum on crimes of genocide committed against the Serbian people by the government of the "Independent State of Croatia" during World War II*, addressed to the General Assembly of the United Nations 1950.

the phenomenon of the mass extirpation of human groups and should organize collective measures to meet collective crime of great dimensions and fatal consequences for mankind.

For centuries the Serbian people have stood in the Balkans as a bulwark of Christian civilization against invaders and oppressors. As a consequence of their stand, great losses have been inflicted on them in the course of centuries. . . . Genocide in its worst and most destructive form, however, was inflicted upon the Serbs in 1941-1945 by the members of the Croatian Fascist movement, the Ustashi. In 1941, after the invasion of Yugoslavia by the Axis, a Croatian puppet state was created by the Axis under the name Independent State of Croatia and all power was given to the Ustashi. . . . In the late evening of April 9, 1941, a speech of Ante Pavelic, proclaiming the Ustashi revolution, was broadcast. It was followed by a fiery speech by Andrija Artukovic, who instigated the Croats not only to kill the Serbian officers and soldiers, but even children in their mothers' wombs. The next day, a Croatian government was formed in which Artukovic was appointed minister of interior.

In that state, which comprised about 3,500,000 Croats and over 2,000,000 Serbs, the odious crime of genocide was perpetrated on the Serbian people by the Ustashi and large segments of the Croatian population.

This crime was not a consequence of aggression but was organized and directed against the Serbs as a nation and as a religious group with the aim of wiping them out and creating an ethnically pure Croatian territory, according to Ante Pavelic, the head of the Ustashi who became head of the Independent State of Croatia.

The tragic experiences of the Serbian people are offered here not in a sense of recrimination but with the constructive purpose of awakening the conscience of the whole world to the necessity of adopting the law against genocide. . . .

It is up to the nations of the world, and especially the leading democracies, to make the choice between indifference which amounts to encouragement, or decisive action by ratifying the Genocide Convention and indicating the moral and legal repudiation of the greatest crime against civilization.

The Genocide Convention deals with national, racial, religious, and ethnical groups, that is, all inhabitants of a country belonging to the same nationality, religion, or race.

The above provisions find full application to the genocide perpetrated by the Fascist, Croatian Ustashi, on the Serbian people. The leaders did not conceal their intention to destroy the Serbian national group.

The massacres were carried out in various ways: by invading villages and towns and killing people in their homes, or after assembling them in schools, town halls, or horse stables.

Sometimes they were assembled in churches. The massacres carried out in the Serbian Orthodox Church in Glina between May and August, 1941, belong undoubtedly to the darkest chapters of human depravity in modern times. . . .

Babies were torn from their mothers' arms, and while they were

> held by their feet, they were swung forcibly against walls, smashing their heads before their mothers' eyes. . . .
>
> The mutilations defy all imagination. Limbs were cut open, salt put inside the wounds and then the limbs were tied together and bandaged. Tongues were torn out, ears, noses, and genitals cut off. . . . Cases are known where Croatian Ustashi would proudly wear necklaces of human eyes and tongues cut from their Serbian victims. . . .

But all these memoranda, all these declarations, and all the appeals have brought no results, and the greatest crimes against humanity committed by the government of satellite Croatia still remain unpunished.

Appendix I

List of Serbian Orthodox Clergymen Killed by Croatian Ustashi

1. Ajdukovic, Ilija, priest, Srednja Gora (Udbina).
2. Alagic, Djuro, archpriest, Gornja Dubrava (Ogulin).
3. Andric, Jovan, priest, Tepljuv (Knin).
4. Askrobic, Dusan, deacon, Mostar.
5. Babic, Dane, priest, Svinjica (Petrinja).
6. Babic, Djordje, priest, Balajnice (Nasice).
7. Ban, Nikola, archpriest, Bjelovar.
8. Banjac, Milan, priest, Drvar.
9. Banjac, Simo, priest, Kamen (Glamoc).
10. Barac, Dr. Branko, archpriest, Sisak.
11. Bilanovic, Branko, student of theology, Monastery Zitomislic.
12. Bjegovic, Jovan, priest, Bihac.
13. Blagoje, Dusan, priest, Stolac.
14. Blazevic, Dobrosav, priest, Donji Vakuf (Bugojno).
15. Bobarevic, Dusan, archpriest, Vlasenica.
16. Bogic, Djordje—Georgije, priest, Nasice.
17. Bogunovic, Nikola J., priest, Donji Lapac.
18. Bozic, Milan, archpriest, Sarajevo.
19. Brakus, Danilo, priest, Bjelo Polje (Korenica).
20. Brazin, Branko, priest, Bolcin (near Bjelovar).
21. Budimir, Ilija, priest, Crni Lug (Bos. Grahovo).
22. Catic, Risto, priest, Gubin (Livno).
23. Cejovic, Vladimir, archdeacon, Mostar.
24. Culumovic, Antin, monk, Monastery Tavna.
25. Cupovic, Aleksandar, archpriest, Bracevci (Djakovo).
26. Curcic, Stevan, priest, Ogulin.
27. Cutilic, Jovan, priest, Veliko Oborsko, Bijeljina.
28. Damjanovic, Dimitrije, archpriest, Nisic (Sarajevo).
29. Danilovic, Zivko, archpriest, Ljubija.
30. Deretic, Ilarion, abbot, Monastery Zavale.
31. Diklic, Dusan, priest, Plitvicka Jezera (Korenica).
32. Diklic, Milos, priest, Kosinja (Perunisic).
33. Djogovic, Bogdan, pastor, Kifino Selo (Nevesinje).
34. Djuric, Ignjatije, monk, Velika Kladusa.

35. Djukic, Milan, priest, Plaski.
36. Djujic, Vladimir, archpriest, Srpske Moravice.
37. Dobrosavljevic, Branko, archpriest, Veljun (Kordun).
38. Dokmanovic, Mile, archpriest, Plaski.
39. Dokmanovic, Mile, priest, Perjasica (Vojnic).
40. Dosen, Milojko, priest, Pocitelj (Gospic).
41. Eklemovic, Gavrilo, monk, Privina Glava.
42. Gajic, Antonije, monk, Mala Tresnjevica.
43. Gakovic, Bogoljub, secretary of church court, Plaski.
44. Galogaza, Petar, archpriest, Petrinja.
45. Gavranovic, Dusan, priest, Vagan (Knin).
46. Golubovic, Milan, teacher of religion, Drvar.
47. Gospic, Djordje, priest, Crnjeljevo (Bijeljina).
48. Grozdanic, Jovan, priest, Ragun (Gospic).
49. Gutovski, Mihailo, archpriest, Trebinje (Vojnic).
50. Gvozdenovic, Vladimir, archpriest, Mostar.
51. Hajdinovic, Ljubomir, priest, Capljina.
52. Ilic, Ilija, archpriest, Plaski.
53. Ivanovic, Branko, archpriest, Sid.
54. Jaksic, Ljubomir, priest, Han Pijesak (Vlasenica).
55. Jerkovic, Dimitrije, priest, Siroka Kula (Gospic).
56. Josipovic, Emilijan, archpriest, Opatovac.
57. Jovanovic, Mihailo, priest, Jablanica (Brcko).
58. Jovanovic, Mihailo—Mika, priest, Brodac (Bijeljina).
59. Jovanovic, Platon, bishop, Banja Luka.
60. Jovic, Sevastijan, monk, Drnis.
61. Katanic, Pavle, priest, Bijeljina.
62. Knjazev, Jovan, priest, Zovik (Brcko).
63. Kojic, Sava, monk, Buhaca (Slunj).
64. Kosanovic, Djuro, archpriest, Plaski.
65. Kosanovic, Teofan, monk, Gomirje.
66. Kovacevic, Radovan, priest, Primislje (Slunj).
67. Kovacina, Vasilije, priest, Metkovic.
68. Krnjevic, Vojislav, archpriest, Mostar.
69. Krnjic, Ljubomir, priest, Brodac (Brcko).
70. Lalic, Bogdan, archpriest, Sarajevo.
71. Landup, Pantelija, priest, Kamensko (Pakrac).
72. Lapcevic, Radovan, archpriest, Blatusa (Vrgin Most).
73. Lavrnja, Spasa, priest, Licka Guvaja (Lapac).
74. Magarasevic, Jovan, archpriest, Tuzla.
75. Majstorovic, Petar, archpriest, Licki Doljani (Lapac).
76. Malobabic, Dusan, archpriest, Kolarici (Vojnic).

77. Mandic, Milos, archpriest, Gracac.
78. Manistulic, Stavro, priest, Pocrnje.
79. Marin, Adam, priest, Koprivnica.
80. Marjan, Djuro, archpriest, Senj.
81. Markovic, Risto, priest, Lagon (Bijeljina).
82. Maskijevic, Dragomir, priest, Derventa (Vlasenica).
83. Matic, Simeon, archpriest, Trzic.
84. Medan, Vojislav, priest, Dubac (Stolac).
85. Milojevic, Djordje, priest, Novi Pavljan (Bjelovar).
86. Minic, Miladin, priest, Biljesevo (Zenica).
87. Momcilovic, Rafailo, monk, Sisatovac.
88. Nakarada, Vasilije, priest, Madzvine (Kordun).
89. Nasadil, Stanislav, priest, Licke Jasenice (Ogulin).
90. Neric, Emilijan, monk, Monastery Tavna.
91. Neskovic, Tihomir, priest, Janja.
92. Ninkovic, Petar, priest, Vojnic.
93. Obradovic, Pavle—Paja, archpriest, Nebljus.
94. Okiljevic, Novak, novice, Monastery Zitomislic.
95. Opacic, Bogdan, priest, Bacuge (Glina).
96. Panjkovic, Vujadin, priest, Debelo Brdo (Korenica).
97. Pantelic, Dimitrije, priest, Cadjevica (Bijeljina).
98. Pascan, Roman, monk, Beocin.
99. Pavlica, Ilija, priest, Munjava (Ogulin).
100. Pejak, Makarije, deacon, Monastery Zitomislic.
101. Pejanovic, Petar, priest, Mostar.
102. Pekic, Milorad, priest, Sibislica (Brcko).
103. Petkovic, Vukasin, priest, Mostar.
104. Petrovic, Milos, priest, Zuzani (Derventa).
105. Peuraca, Mile, priest, Gornji Budacki (Vojnic).
106. Pintar, Ilija, priest, Srpska Jasenica (Bos. Krupa).
107. Popovic, Marko, archpriest, Blagaj (Bugojno).
108. Popovic, Mihailo, priest, Poljaca (Knin).
109. Popovic, Milan, priest, Rmanj.
110. Popovic, Milenko, deacon, teacher of religion, Bijeljina.
111. Popovic, Savo, priest, Brezovo Polje (Brcko).
112. Popovic, Stevan, archpriest, Medjasi (Bijeljina).
113. Prodanovic, Marko, student of theology, Monastery Zitomislic.
114. Radic, Ognjen, priest, Mostar.
115. Radmanovic, Nikola, archpriest, Slusnica (Slunj).
116. Rajcevic, Milos, archpriest, Plaski.
117. Rajcevic, Uros, priest, Mogoric.

118. Raseta, Petar, archpriest (Bunic).
119. Rasic, Vojislav, priest, Tupnjevac (Bijeljina).
120. Reljic, Kiprijan, priest, Vera (Vukovar)
121. Ristanovic, Drago, student of theology, Ruplje (Trebinje).
122. Samardzic, Rodoljub, priest, Kulen Vakuf.
123. Sarenac, Bozidar, priest, Dracevo.
124. Savic, Janko, priest, Knezina (Vlasenica).
125. Savic, Milos, priest, Milici (Vlasenica).
126. Semilutski, Andrej, priest, Majur (Djakovo).
127. Skendzic, Vukolaj, priest, Brinj.
128. Skoric, Ljubomir, priest, Modrani (Bijeljina).
129. Skorupan, Dmitar, priest, Cvijanovic Brdo (Slunj).
130. Sokovic, Dobrosav, priest, Sjeverin (Rudo).
131. Spahic, Relja, priest, Blazuj (Sarajevo).
132. Stanisic, Kosta, archpriest, Livno.
133. Stanisavljevic, Rade, teacher of religion, Korenica.
134. Stanisavljevic, Radivoje, priest, Korenica.
135. Starovic, Spiridon, archpriest, Avtovac.
136. Stepanov, Jasa, priest, Plaski.
137. Stijacic, Matija, archpriest, Smiljani (Gospic).
138. Stojsavljevic, Mirko, priest, Glamoc.
139. Stojanovic, Djuro, priest, Plaski.
140. Stojanovic, Jovan, archpriest, Pakrac.
141. Strbac, Damjan, priest (Bos. Grahovo).
142. Stulic, Dositej, monk, Monastery Krupa.
143. Subotin, Metodije, monk, Gomirje.
144. Subotic, Dusan, archpriest, Bosanska Gradiska.
145. Susnjar, Dusan, priest, Dunjac (Vojnic).
146. Todorovic, Konstantin, priest, Ugljenik (Bijeljina).
147. Tovirac, Petar, priest, Zabrdje (Bijeljina).
148. Trisic, Milan, priest, Vrlika, Sinj.
149. Visnjevac, Vidak, archpriest, Gacko.
150. Vojinovic, Vojislav, priest, Osijek.
151. Vranjesevic, Bogdan, priest, Krupa na Vrbasu.
152. Vucinic, Petar, priest, Plaski.
153. Vuckovic, Nikola, priest, Drljace.
154. Vucurevic, Konstantin, monk, Monastery Zitomislic (Mostar).
155. Vujevic, Jefto, archpriest, Mostar.
156. Vujic, Milos, priest, Radovice (Slunj).
157. Vukicevic, Dositej, monk, Monastery Zitomislic.
158. Zagorac, Nikola, priest, Petrovo Selo (Korenica).

159. Zecevic, Jovan, priest, Bozuca (Tepce).
160. Zivadinovic, Lazar, archdeacon, Zagreb.
161. Zivkovic, Gligorije, archpriest, Baluga.
162. Zjalic, Slavko, priest, Paklenice (Novska).

163. Lazarevic, Jovan, priest, Korduk, Zvornik.
164. Milovanovic, Sevastijan, priest, Duvno.
165. Ostojic, Dragomir, priest, Zvornik.
166. Rajakovic, Dimitrije, priest, Nisic, Sarajevo.
167. Skakic, Nikola, priest, Sarajevo.
168. Svitlic, Ljubomir, priest, Bijeljina.
169. Trlajic, Sava, bishop, Plaski.
170. Vasic, Mihailo, priest, Banja Luka.
171. Zimonjic, Petar, archbishop, Sarajevo.

Appendix II

List of Rabbis Killed by Croatian Ustashi

1. David Atijas, Cantor of Zagreb.
2. Izak Baruch, Rabbi at Travnik.
3. Solomon Baruch, Rabbi and Cantor at Dubrovnik, aged 42.
4. Arnold Basch, Cantor of Zagreb, aged about 27.
5. Lavoslav Buchsbaum, Chief Cantor at Krizevci, aged 72.
6. Otto Deutsch, Rabbi at Susak.
7. Dr. Deutsham, Rabbi at Ludberg, aged about 70.
8. Izidor Dolf, Cantor at Bjelovar, aged about 45.
9. Izak Finzi, Rabbi at Split.
10. Miroslav Freiberger, Chief Rabbi at Zagreb, aged about 40.
11. Izak Freides, Rabbi at Pakrac, aged about 55.
12. Paul Froehlich, Chief Cantor at Osijek, aged 28.
13. Josip Gilmann, Rabbi and Cantor at Daruvar, aged about 65.
14. Dr. Rudolf Gluech, Rabbi at Varazdin, aged about 70.
15. N. Grossmann, Chief Cantor of Beograd, aged about 55.
16. Elia Gruenwald, Chief Rabbi at Cakovac, aged about 55.
17. Hinko Gruenwald, Rabbi at Podravska Slatina, aged about 95.
18. Isidor Guren, Cantor at Osijek, aged about 60.
19. Dr. M. Heisz, Chief Rabbi at Sisak, aged about 60.
20. Izidor Hersmovic, Cantor at Vinkovci, aged about 60.

21. Lavoslav Kahn, Cantor of the Orthodox Jewish Community at Zagreb, aged about 45.
22. Leon Katan, Cantor at Brcko, aged 66.
23. Leopold Katz, Rabbi and Cantor at Daruvar, aged about 65.
24. Ignaz Klein, Rabbi at Pancevo, aged 48.
25. Jakov Klinkovwstein, Chief Cantor at Sisak, aged about 65.
26. Jakob Kohn, Cantor at Varazdin.
27. Dr. N. Kohn, Rabbi at Koprivnica, aged about 58.
28. N. Kohn, Rabbi and Cantor at Banja Luka.
29. M. Loewy, Dean and Professor at the School of Rabbis at Zagreb, aged about 70.
30. Eugen Mandel, Cantor at Zagreb, aged about 35.
31. Vijoslav Mandel, Cantor at Vukovar, aged 32.
32. David Meissl, Cantor at Karlovac, aged about 55.
33. David Perera, Rabbi at Mostar, aged about 40.
34. Mijo Propper, Chief Cantor at Vinkovci, aged about 60.
35. Mordeschsil Rikow, Rabbi at Slavonska Pozega, aged about 70.
36. Alexander Roth, Cantor at Djakovo.
37. M. Roth, Rabbi at Murska Sobota, aged 70.
38. Jakov Schmelzer, Cantor at Nasice, aged about 35.
39. Dr. N. Schlank, Chief Rabbi at Zemun, aged about 55.
40. N. Schwartz, Rabbi and Cantor at Donji Miholjac, aged about 45.
41. Samuel Singer, Cantor of Zagreb, aged about 65.
42. Adolf Springer, Chief Cantor at Virovitica, aged about 45.
43. Andrija Trilnik, Rabbi at Nova Gradiska, aged about 30.
44. Dr. Simon Ungar, Rabbi of Osijek, aged about 60.
45. Dragutin Vogel, Cantor of Zagreb, aged 27.
46. Josip Weissmann, Chief Cantor, Zagreb, in pension, aged 73.
47. Leo Wolfenzon, Cantor at Koprivnica, aged about 55.

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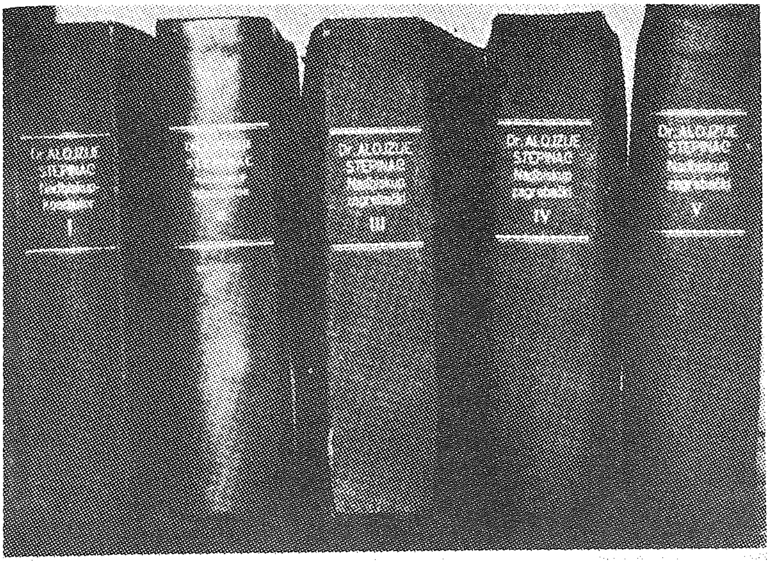
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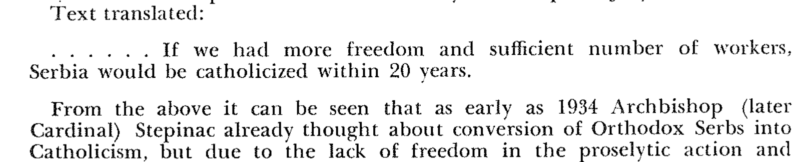
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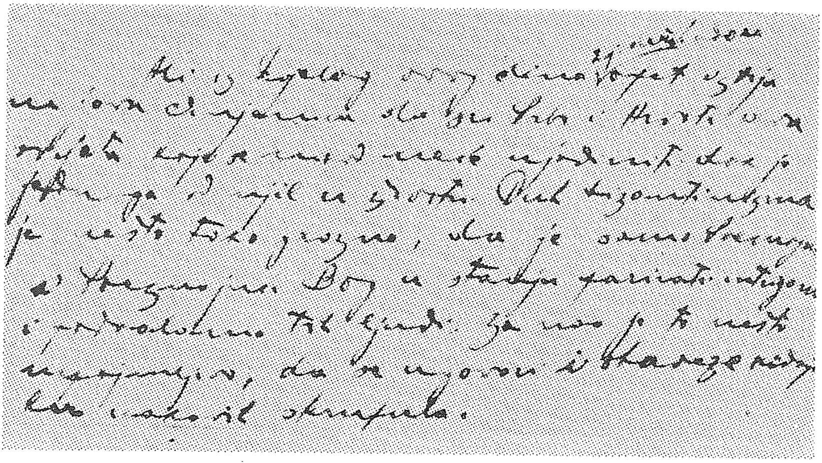
Photograph of five diaries of Archbishop Dr. Aloysius Stepinac, which reveal documentary evidence concerning relations between the Vatican and the Ustashi "independent State of Groatia."



Extract from Stepinac's handwritten Diary, book I, p. 21, July 3 and 4, 1934. Text translated:

. . . . . . If we had more freedom and sufficient number of workers, Serbia would be catholicized within 20 years.

From the above it can be seen that as early as 1934 Archbishop (later Cardinal) Stepinac already thought about conversion of Orthodox Serbs into Catholicism, but due to the lack of freedom in the proselytic action and necessary workers in Serbia, the Croatian Catholic hierarchy could not accomplish their proselitic mission.



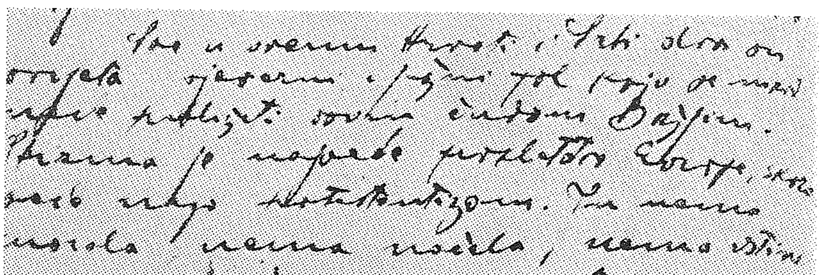
Extract from Stepinac's Diary, book IV, p. 172, March 27, 1941.

On the pages 45 & 46 of this book is an explanation of the Coup d'Etat of March 27, 1941, at which time the Yugoslav Army defied Hitler and the Axis.

The photograph above shows political affiliation of Archbishop Stepinac and his ill thoughts toward the Serbs for their defiant role against the Axis. It is obvious that Stepinac lamented the fact that Yougoslavia broke with the Axis.

Translation of the extract above reads as follows:

From this whole act concerning the Coup d'Etat the fact remains that the Serbs and Croats are two [different] worlds which cannot be united while one lives. The spirit of Byzantinism [meaning Eastern Orthodox religion] is something so terrible that only Almighty and All knowing God is able to withstand the intrigues and deceits of these people. For us [meaning the Catholic Groats] it is something unbelievable to break agreements and promises without any scruples.



Extract from Stepinac's Diary, book IV, p. 176, March 28, 1941.

The next day Archbishop Stepinac again wrote in his diary in the same spirit about the Serbs, concerning the Coup d'Etat of March 27, as follows:

All in all the Croats and Serbs are two worlds, the north and south poles, which can never come close except by a miracle of God. Schism [meaning Eastern Orthodoxy] is the greatest curse in Europe, almost greater than is Protestantism. Here, there is no moral, no principles, no truth, no justice, no honesty (photograph above).



DRUGO IZDANJE

NEDJELJNE VIJESTI

IZDAJE HRVATSKO NOVINARSKO DRUŠTVO

HRVATSKA JE STUPILA U RAT

protiv Engleske i Sjedinjenih država

ODLUKA HRVATSKE DRŽAVNE VLADE

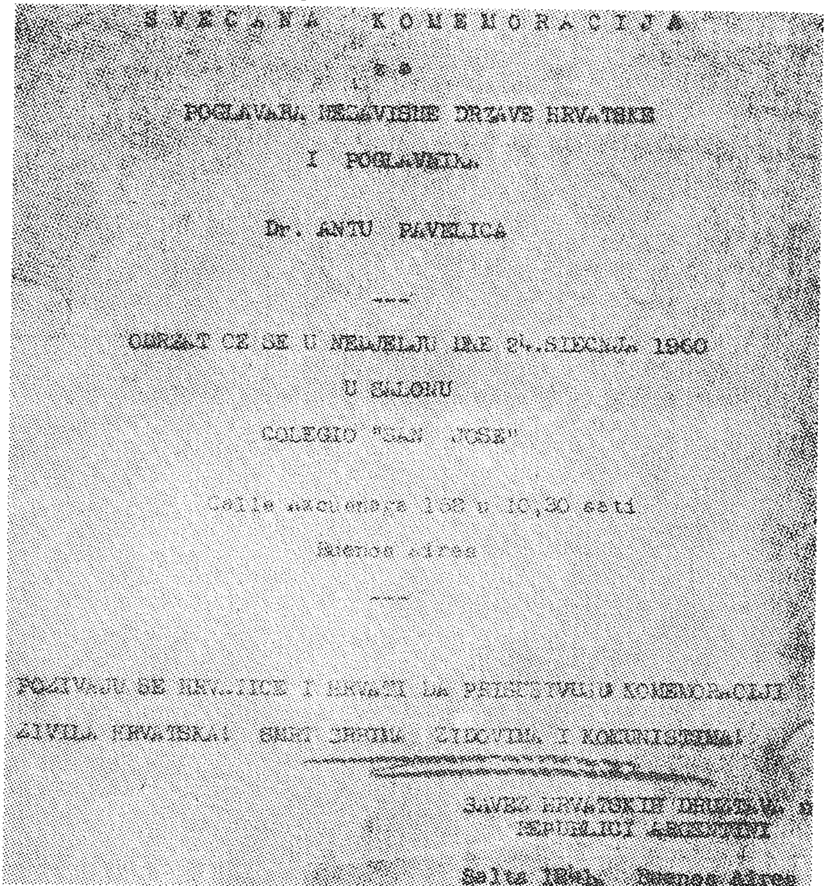
This Croatian newspaper *Nedeljne Vijesti,* Zagreb, Dec. 15, 1941, bears the headline:

GROATIA DECLARES WAR against England and United States [of America] on the side of Great Powers and other States of the Axis.

The picture on the photograph shows The Poglavnik Pavelic reading the DECLARATION OF WAR over Radio Station Zagreb in presence of Andrija Artukovic (living now in Los Angeles, Calif.) and other ministers of his government.

USTASHI ARE STILL SPREADING RACIAL HATRED

As already has been said, Croatian Ustashi organizations are still spreading racial hatred in the Free World. One of the many proofs is the following photograph of an invitation of the FEDERATION OF THE CROATIAN ORGANIZATIONS in Argentina to Pavelic's Commemoration:



SVECANA KOMEMORACIJA

ZA

POGLAVARA NEZAVISNE DRZAVE HRVATSKE

I POGLAVNIKA

Dr. ANTU PAVELICA

ODRZAT CE SE U NEDJELJU DNE 24. SIJECNJA 1960

U SALONU

COLEGIO "SAN JOSE"

[illegible] 158 u 10,30 sati

Buenos Aires

[illegible]

[illegible]

Salta 1241, Buenos Aires

Translation:

COMMEMORATION

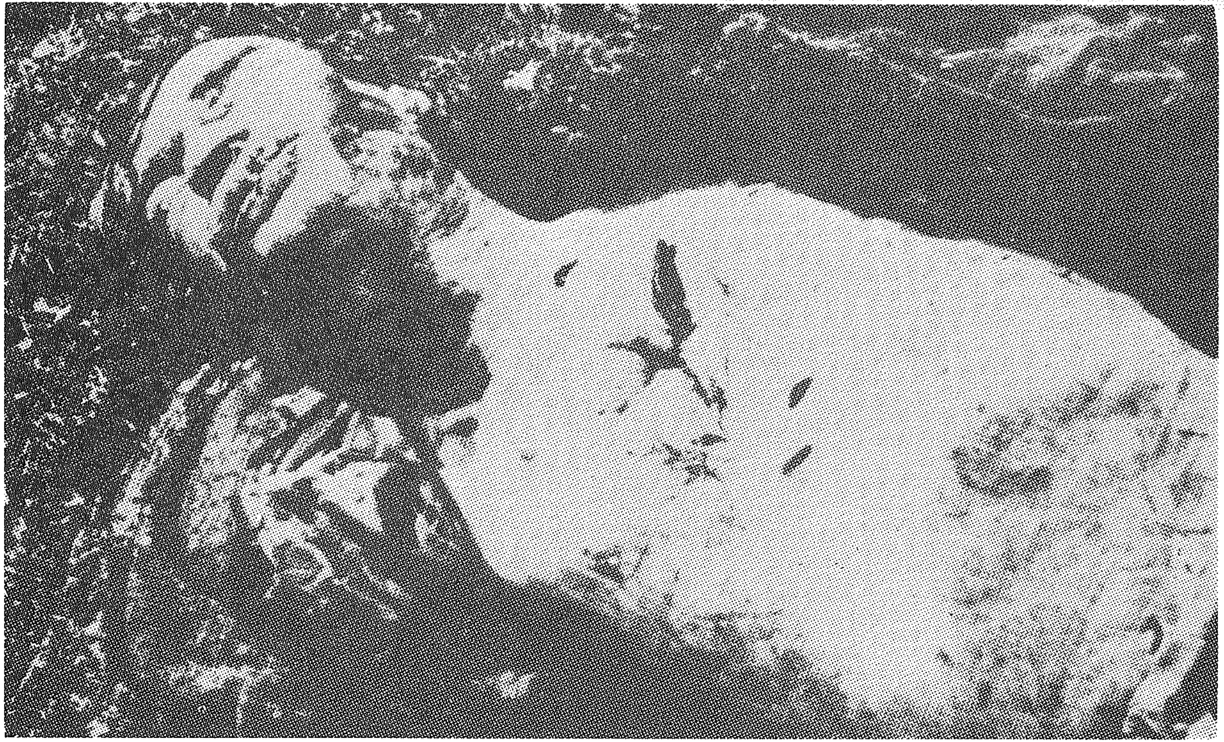
for the leader of the Independent State of Croatia, the Pogla:nik, Dr. Ante Pavelic, will be held Sunday, January 24, 1960 in the Salon Colegio "San Jose," Colle Azcuenaga 158, at 10.30 o'clock, Buenos Aires.

Every Croat is invited to attend this commemoration. Long live Croatia! *Death to the Serbs, to the Jews, and to the communists.*

Federation of the Croatian Organizations in Argentine Republic
Salta 1241, Buenos Aires.

* * *

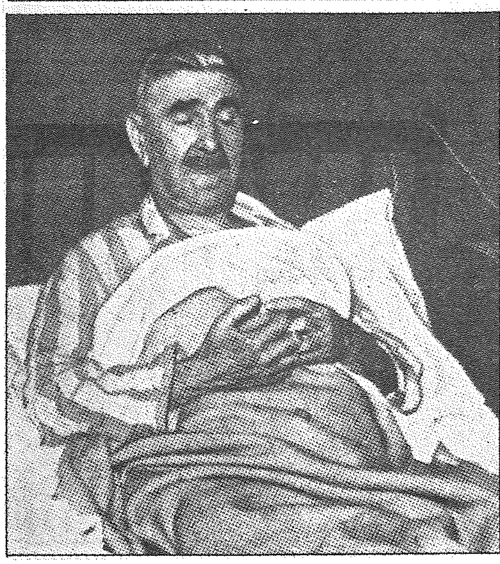
These people cannot cover their racial and religious hatred and antidemocratic actions under false pretenses they are fighting the communists. They are just trying to do that.

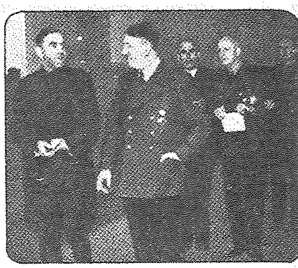


The well-known industrialist and philanthropist Serb Milos Teslic, 26 years old, from Sisak, was cruelly tortured and murdered by Ustashi. His legs were broken, ears and lips cut off, eyes gouged, chest stabbed and finally the heart was extracted through a big hole made on his chest. As the witnesses were testifying the present Ustashi were telling later the heart of the tortured Milos was still beating on the palm of an Ustashi.

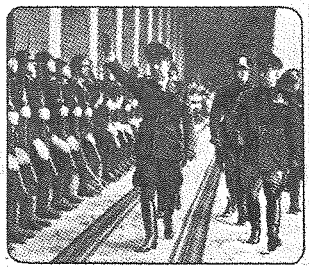
ANTE PAVELITCH, assassin de 500.000 Serbes

EST MORT HIER DANS SON LIT





Hitler avait chargé Ante Pavelitch de mettre au pas les Yougoslaves : cinq cent mille Serbes tués, mais aussi des Tziganes et des Juifs.



6 ★★ CHICAGO DAILY NEWS Tues., Dec. 29, '59

Nazi Puppet Ruler of Croatia Dies

Pavelic Wanted in Killing Of 700,000 Serbs and Jews

MADRID—(AP)—Ante Pavelic, 70, Quisling president of Croatia during World War II and one of the leading war criminals still at large, died in the German hospital here.

The death was reported by Madrid newspapers and confirmed by the municipal funeral service, which said it had taken the body to a morgue. It declined to say when funeral services would be held.

The hospital refused to give information about the death or its cause but referred callers to Dr. Rudolf Sajitz, who attended Pavelic. The doctor's office said he was away on vacation.

* * *

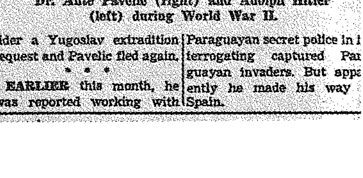
PAVELIC was wanted by Yugoslavia for trial on charges that he was responsible for the killing of 700,000 Serbs and Jews during his 3½ years as the Axis viceroy.

He fled Yugoslavia in May, 1945, and turned up in Argentina later in the year for asylum under ex-dictator Juan Peron.

He was wounded in an assassination attempt in April, 1957, which he blamed on Yugoslavian agents. A short time later, Argentina agreed to consider a Yugoslav extradition request and Pavelic fled again.

* * *

EARLIER this month, he was reported working with Paraguayan secret police in interrogating captured Paraguayan invaders. But apparently he made his way to Spain.



Dr. Ante Pavelic (right) and Adolph Hitler (left) during World War II.



Archbishop Stepinac (first row in the middle) during a session of the Ustashi Parliament.

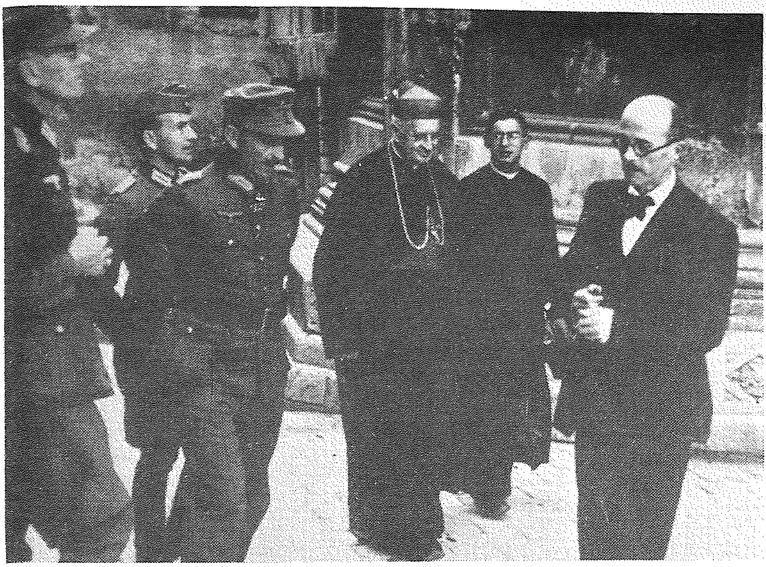

Kroz naše krajeve

Priznanje vrlom hrvatskom svećeniku i borcu

Great Zupan (governor) Grgic presenting an Ustashi monk, Fra. Domenic Curic, with a decoration.



Pavelic in company with Papal Nuncio Marcone visiting with *Ustashi Junior Order*. Children are greeting them in Fascistic way.



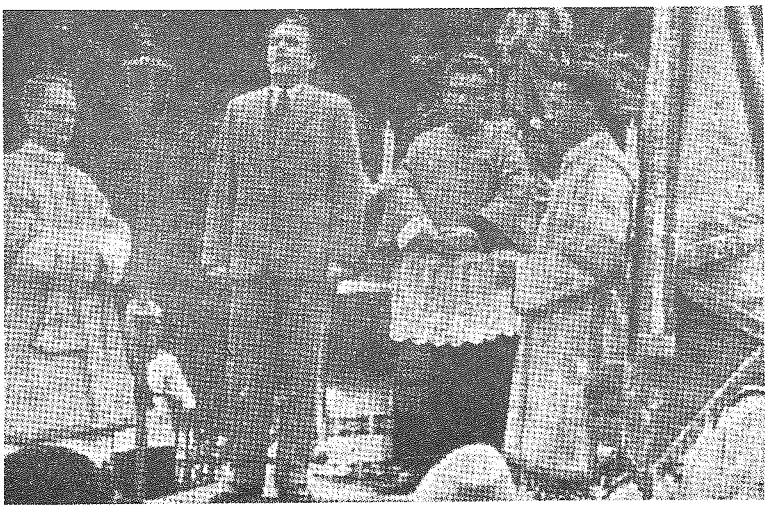
Dalmatian Bishop Jeronim Mileta, in company with a German general.



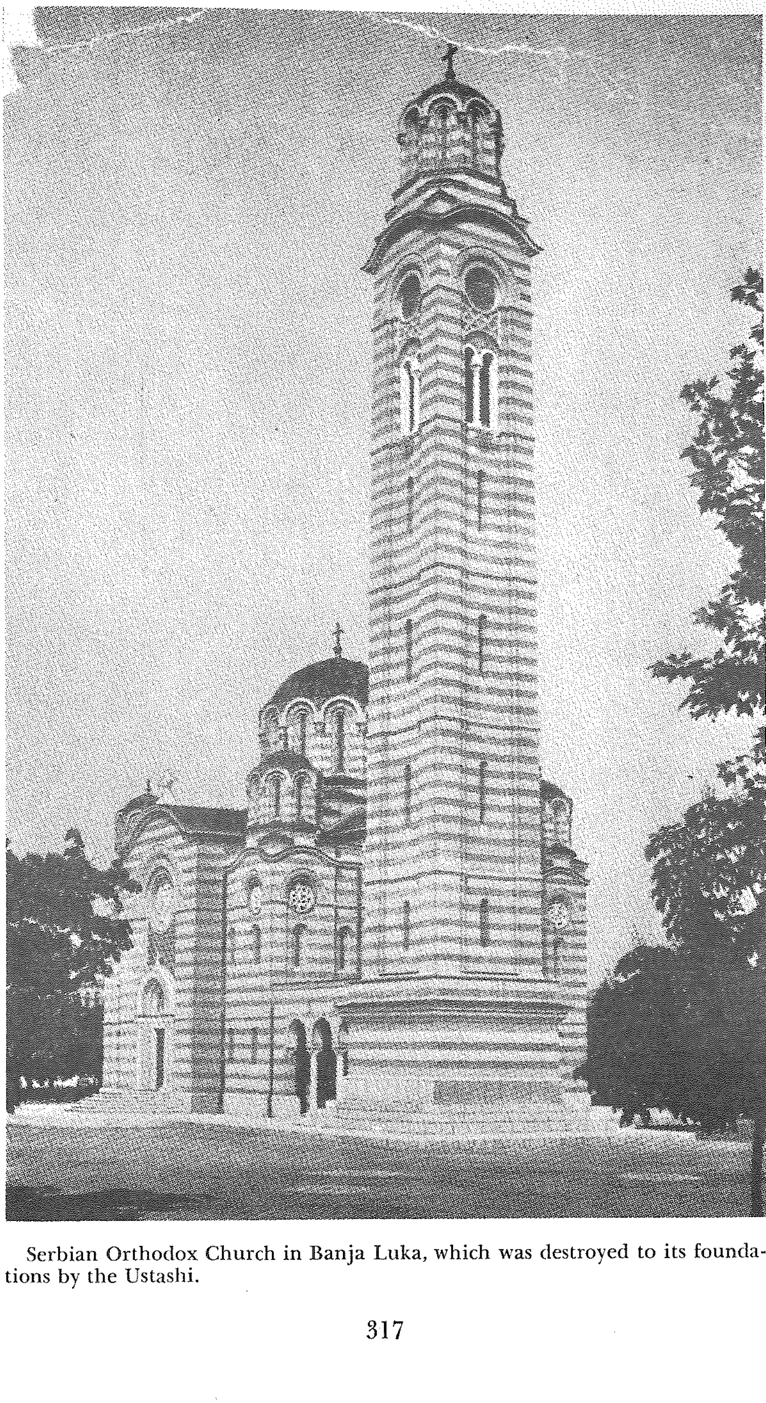
Nuns leading "Ustasku Zensku Luzu" (university female branch of the Ustashi). Pavelic is standing among them.



A session of the Ustashi Parliament. In the diplomatic loge (right), the Papal Nuncio Marcone (in white robe) can be seen; at the left, his secretary Masucci.



Local Ustashi commander, Plese, speaking from the altar in a church. The altar was the rostrum for Ustashi propaganda speeches.



Serbian Orthodox Church in Banja Luka, which was destroyed to its foundations by the Ustashi.



The forcible proselytism of Orthodox Serbs in the presence of armed Ustashi in Staza in 1941.



Dr. Aloysius Stepinac, the Archbishop of Zagreb (later Cardinal), conversing with Ustashi Generals, Stancer and Sertic.



Before the inspection by International Red Cross, Croatian government (Artukovic) *ordered the burning of people alive* at Jasenovac. Charred bodies were discarded in Jasenovac yard to make room for burning more people in specially built ovens.



Her eyes were gouged out for the *eyeball collection* of Ante Pavelic.

Herewith is the testimony of the Italian writer, Curzio Malaparte, who interviewed Pavelic at Zagreb: "While he talked," wrote Malaparte, "I kept looking a wicker basket placed on the right of the Poglavnik on his desk. The lid was raised and in the basket was a variety of seafood, or so it seemed."

"Oysters from Dalmatia?" I inquired. "Ante Pavelic raised the lid of the basket and showing me the seafood that looked like a mass of sticky, gelatinous oysters, he said with a tired, kindly smile: *"A gift from my loyal Ustashi! Forty pounds of human eyes!"*



The Serbian peasants are digging their own graves under the guard of the armed Croatian Ustashis.



This picture shows what Ante Pavelic, Andrija Artukovic (now living in Los Angeles, Calif.), and approximately 76 priests and monks in the U.S.A. left behind when they fled after debacle of Satellite Croatia, 1945.



Saw, knife and gun being used on this Serbian peasant.



A man being prepared to have his head cut off.

Notes


VARAZDIN
LEPOGLAVA
LOBOR
G. RIJEKA
LJUBLJANA
SLOVENIJA
SAVA RIV.
ZAGREB
HRVATSKA
BJELOV
JASKA
KUPA RIV
SISAK
KARLOVAC
PETRINJA
ITALY
BEFORE 1945
YUGOSLAVIAN
SINCE 1945
FIUME-RIJEKA
SUŠAK
OGULIN
KORANA
GLINA
DVOR
KORDUN
UNA RIV
NOVI
KOSTAJN
SLUNJ
KRK
POLA
CRES
SENJ
LIKA
PRIJEDOR
OTOČAC
BIHAĆ
BOSANSKA KRAYINA
RAB
JADOVNO
SANA R.
BANJA
LOŠINJ
GOSPIĆ
PAG
B
BOS
GRAČAC
DRVAR
BOSN
ZADAR
(ZARA)
DUGI OTOK
ADRIATIC SEA
DALMACIA
KNIN
BY ITALY
LEGEND:
CROATIAN PUPPET STATE
STATE BOUNDARY
PROVINCIAL
CETINA R.
ŠIBENIK
SINJ
SPLIT
USTASHI SO CALLED SUMMARY COURTS
BRAČ
USTASHI CAMPS
HVAR
VIS
TERRITORY OCCUPIED BY ITALY
KORČULA
LASTOVO
TERRITORY OCCUPIED BY HUNGARY



HUNGARY
DANUBE
SUBOTICA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
SENTA
KIKINDA
SOMBOR
KULA
DRAVA RIV
BARANJA
D. MIHOLJAC
DARUVAR
BACHKA
(BAČKA)
BANAT
TISSA
OSIJEK
PETROVGRAD
(BEČKEREK)
DJAKOVO
NOVI SAD
GRADIŠKA
VINKOVCI
DUNAV
SLAVONSKI BROD
SREM (SIRMIA)
SAVA RIV.
MITROVICA
RUMA
PANČEVO
DERVENTA
BOSNA R.
ŠAMAC
BRČKO
ŠABAC
BEOGRAD
(BELGRADE)
DOBOJ
LUKA
BJELJINA
TUZLA
LOZNICA
KRUSČICA
JAJCE
ZVORNIK
SERBIA
KOLUBARA
VALJEVO
ZENICA
TRAVNIK
KAKANJ
SARAJEVO
VIŠEGRAD
UŽICE
W. MORAVA R.
ČAČAK
JABLANICA
KONJIC
DRINA R
LIM R.
FOČA
PLEVLJA
MOSTAR
NERETVA
TARA R.
SJENICA
NOVI PAZAR
NEVESINJE
GACKO
PIVA R.
BJELO POLJE
MONTENEGRO
ŠAVNIK
KOLAŠIN
BERANE
MLJET
TREBINJE
ZETA
MORACHA
PEĆ
NIKŠIĆ
DUBROVNIK
(RAGUSA)
DEČANI
CETINJE
KOTOR
PODGORICA
ALBANIA